

Laboratoire de rattachement : Centre de recherches sociologiques
et politiques de Paris, UMR 7217 du CNRS

THÈSE

Pour l'obtention du titre de Docteur en Science Politique

Présenté et soutenu publiquement

Le 13 MOIS 09, 2021 par

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Titre de la thèse

**A Conceptual Reappraisal of Chinese Deliberative
Democracy (*Xieshang Minzhu* 协商民主)**

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Keywords

Chinese Politics, Consultative/Deliberative Democracy, Consultative/Deliberative Governance, Authoritarianism

Acknowledgement

I have benefitted from a great many debates and critical comments in writing this thesis, I owe a special word of thanks to my mentor, Yves Sintomer. From the very beginning in 2017, when we met in Beijing, to my last stay in Paris, Yves has inspired me with much passion on some exciting ideas. His generous support and encouragements have definitely enriched my understandings on both China and the world. Also, special thanks to Emilie Frenkiel for proofreading the whole thesis with careful review, so that I can both ameliorate my language and content.

My idea of a critical reappraisal on China's deliberative democracy (*xieshang minzhu* 协商民主) came from constant discussions with many colleagues, some of whom were actively to further provide written comments on the earlier drafts. They are sinologists with special knowledge in Chinese politics, Westerners interested in China's political changes, and critics of China's authoritarianism. In particular, I wish to express my gratitude to Yunyun Zhou, Rebekka Åsnes Sagild, Olivier Duclaud, Youxing Lang, Demin Duan, Canpu Chen, Gunter Schubert, Alice Le Goff and some other anonymous referees. While, certainly, I am also grateful for those critical comments from my colleges in every workshop and discussion.

Paris 8 University, Center for Sociological and Political Research in Paris, and the UMR 7217 research unit of the CNRS in particular, have provided me with excellent working places and accesses to many libraries and academic resources. The four-year experience in Paris undoubtedly is the best memory of my academic life insofar.

Finally but most importantly, I cannot finish this thesis without the love and support of my family and friends, especially for my friends, Wei Xie, Yutian Ke, Liping Zhu, Yanli Xiang, they were always there for help every time when I needed them. I hope this contribution can enhance a consolidate understanding on Chinese political changes in the very latest trend, I look forward nonetheless to continuing our discussions in the future.

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List of Abbreviations

C/LPPCC: Central/Local People's Political Consultative Conference

CCP: Chinese Communist Party

CESE: French Economic, Social and Environmental Council

CNDP: la Commission nationale du débat public

CPC: Central Party Committee

CPPCC: Chinese People's Communist Political Consultative Conference

HPC: Huizhou People's Congress

HPPCC: Huizhou People's Political Consultative Conference

LPC: Local People's Congress

LPPCC: Local People's Communist Political Consultative Conference

MG: Municipal Government

MPC: Municipal People's Congress

NPC: National People's Congress

PLA: People's Liberation Army

PPCC: People's Political Consultative Conference

PPE: la programmation pluriannuelle de l'énergie

PRC: People's Republic of China

TPAO: Town Poverty Alleviation Office

Summary

This is a three-part doctoral dissertation composed of five chapters. The first part includes the first chapter on deliberative democracy in the West, and the second part includes the second, third, and fourth chapters with a further conceptual revisiting and reappraisal of the Chinese concept of deliberative democracy (*xieshang minzhu* 协商民主) and its institutionalization. The third part includes the fifth chapter with a shift from the ideal concept to the empirical exploration through case studies.

To begin with, chapter one introduces and further revisits the deliberative democracy in the West. This concept of deliberative democracy and governance aims at a vibrant democratic reconstruction via reason-giving dialogic interactions amongst equal citizens. This *talk-centered* approach puts new emphasis on the ‘will of the people’ to provide contemporary democracy with new meanings. In this chapter, we spell out the differences between democratic deliberation, representative democracy and participatory democracy. Criticism towards deliberative democracy theory is mainly blaming its unrealistic design and incompatibility with practical realities. Later efforts of a systemic turn to deliberative democracy offer a valuable response.

The second chapter is a critical analysis of Western scholarship on China’s deliberative democracy in connection with authoritarianism. Citizens do not have full access to suffrage and freedom of speech under the one-party regime. The state machinery constantly infringes upon individual rights with inadequate legal safeguard, and the regime enforces comprehensive surveillance and control of the society. Nevertheless, this authoritarianism survives and has even been consolidated in the last three decades. Its consultative and deliberative approach constitutes a crucial part of its resilience. Authoritarian deliberation and authoritarian consultation are two major instruments of China’s authoritarianism rather than of citizen empowerment.

Chapter three reviews China’s domestic research, and resultingly depicts another picture. These ideological and discourse differences can be explained by a polarization in Western and Chinese political studies. The domestic understanding of deliberation is embedded in the indigenization of Chinese politics. Against this analytical framework, my analysis departs from the official propaganda framing of consultative democracy (in Chinese *xieshang minzhu* 协商民主), which constitutes the basic democratic discourse and the main form of governance in China. Chinese intellectuals have mainly followed and consistently

reinterpreted this official discourse while seldomly touching more sensitive topics like political reforms and democracy. Also, interestingly, the Chinese public has its own concept and behavioral logic for deliberation, which in turn, further reshapes the cultural understanding to Chinese (grassroots) deliberative democracy.

Chapter four focuses on the institutionalization of authoritarian consultation and deliberation. Institutionalization has several meanings in both democracies and autocracies. It is mostly related to modernization, so that an institutionalized method can also be adopted by authoritarian rulers to consolidate and reinforce authoritarianism through legitimized, (in)formal institutions. Special consultative institutions like the C/LPPCC and the United Front Work, as well as various informal communicative and interactive forms (for example, bound by customs, habits, unspoken rules and conventions) are channeling bottom-up communication and giving people a say. Institutionalized consultation and deliberation are highlighted by the CCP in its modernization blueprint which downplays elections as such an approach can effectively deal with social uncertainties and uprisings by surveying and analyzing public preferences.

Chapter five moves to the practical level, with the presentation of case studies. These empirical analyses of China's consultative and deliberative governance are based on a long ethnographic fieldwork spanning the geographical, political and hierarchical differences of the legislative consultation and grassroots (village) deliberation. These cases cannot exhaust all governance occasions, especially given the uneven development of a country as large as China. Nevertheless, my empirical analyses further indicate what the consultative and deliberative governance looks like in authoritarianism and how it works. Legislative consultation corresponds to a top-down process of public collection of preferences and analysis. I explain how this game among the main stakeholders functions within Chinese authoritarian legislation. While Chinese village deliberation is somehow indicated some authentic deliberations with incorporating many traditional- and cultural-influencers in.

Résumé

Remerciements

J'ai bénéficié de nombreux débats et commentaires critiques dans la rédaction de cette thèse, je dois un mot de remerciement particulier à mon mentor, Yves Sintomer. Depuis le tout début en 2017, lorsque nous nous sommes rencontrés à Pékin, jusqu'à mon dernier séjour à Paris, Yves m'a inspiré avec beaucoup d'enthousiasme des idées passionnantes. Son généreux soutien et ses encouragements ont définitivement enrichi ma compréhension de la Chine et du monde. Un remerciement spécial à Emilie Frenkiel pour la relecture de l'ensemble de la thèse avec une révision minutieuse afin que je puisse à la fois améliorer la langue et le contenu.

Mon idée d'une réévaluation critique de la démocratie délibérative de la Chine (*xieshang minzhu* 协商民主) est venue de discussions constantes avec de nombreux collègues, dont certains devaient continuer à fournir des commentaires écrits sur les projets précédents. Ce sont des sinologues ayant une connaissance particulière de la politique chinoise, des Occidentaux intéressés par les changements politiques de la Chine et des critiques de l'autoritarisme chinois. En particulier, je tiens à exprimer ma gratitude à Yunyun Zhou, Rebekka Åsnes Sagild, Olivier Duclaud, Lang Youxing, Duan Demin, Chen Canpu, Gunter Schubert, et quelques autres arbitres anonymes. J'exprime aussi ma reconnaissance à mes collègues pour leurs commentaires critiques lors de nos discussions et ateliers.

L'Université Paris 8, le Centre de Recherche Sociologique et Politique de Paris et l'unité de recherche UMR 7217 du CNRS en particulier, m'ont fourni d'excellents lieux de travail et des accès à de nombreuses bibliothèques et ressources académiques. Cette expérience de quatre ans à Paris est sans aucun doute le meilleur souvenir de ma vie universitaire à ce jour.

Enfin mais surtout, je ne peux pas terminer cette thèse sans l'amour et le soutien de ma famille et de mes amis, en particulier Xie Wei, Ke Yutian, Zhu Liping et Xiang Yanli; ils étaient toujours là pour m'aider à chaque fois que j'en avais besoin. J'espère que cette contribution pourra apporter une compréhension plus fine des changements politiques chinois les plus récents, je me réjouis néanmoins de poursuivre nos discussions à l'avenir.

Liste des Abréviations

PCC : Parti communiste chinois

CNDP : la Commission nationale du débat public

CCP : Comité central du parti

CCPPC : Conférence consultative politique communiste du peuple chinois

CPH : Congrès du peuple de Huizhou

CCPCP : Conférence consultative politique communiste populaire locale

GM : Gouvernement municipal

CPM : Congrès populaire municipal

CNP : Congrès national du peuple

APL : Armée populaire de libération

CCPP : Conférence consultative politique populaire

PPE : la programmation pluriannuelle de l'énergie

RPC : République populaire de Chine

BLCP : Bureau de lutte contre la pauvreté dans les villes

Résumé

Il s'agit d'une thèse de doctorat en trois parties composées de cinq chapitres. La première partie comprend le premier chapitre sur la démocratie délibérative en Occident, et la deuxième partie comprend les deuxièmes, troisièmes et quatrièmes chapitres avec une nouvelle révision conceptuelle et une réévaluation du concept chinois de démocratie délibérative (*xieshang minzhu* 协商民主) et son institutionnalisation. La troisième partie comprend le cinquième chapitre avec un passage du concept idéal à l'exploration empirique à travers des études de cas.

Pour commencer, le premier chapitre présente et revisite plus précisément la démocratie délibérative en Occident. Ce concept de démocratie délibérative et de gouvernance vise une reconstruction démocratique dynamique via des interactions dialogiques motivantes entre citoyens égaux. Cette approche centrée sur le discours met un nouvel accent sur la « volonté du peuple » de donner à la démocratie contemporaine de nouvelles significations. Dans ce chapitre, nous exposons les différences entre la délibération démocratique, la démocratie représentative et la démocratie participative. La critique de la théorie de la démocratie délibérative blâme principalement sa conception irréaliste et son incompatibilité avec les réalités pratiques. Les efforts ultérieurs d'un virage systémique vers la démocratie délibérative offrent une réponse précieuse.

Le deuxième chapitre est une analyse critique de la recherche occidentale sur la démocratie délibérative de la Chine en relation avec l'autoritarisme. Les citoyens n'ont pas pleinement accès au suffrage et à la liberté d'expression sous le régime du parti unique. L'appareil d'État enfreint constamment les droits individuels avec une protection juridique inadéquate et le régime impose une surveillance et un contrôle complets de la société. Néanmoins, cet autoritarisme survit et s'est même consolidé au cours des trois dernières décennies. L'approche consultative et délibérative constitue un élément essentiel de sa résilience. Les délibérations autoritaires et les consultations autoritaires sont deux instruments majeurs de l'autoritarisme chinois plutôt que de l'autonomisation des citoyens.

Le chapitre trois passe en revue les recherches nationales chinoises et dépeint par conséquent une autre image. Ces différences idéologiques et de discours s'expliquent par une polarisation des études politiques occidentales et chinoises. La compréhension nationale de la délibération est ancrée dans l'indigénisation de la politique chinoise. Dans ce cadre analytique, mon analyse s'écarte du cadre de propagande officielle de la démocratie consultative (*xieshang minzhu* 协商民主) qui constitue le discours démocratique de base et la

principale forme de gouvernance en Chine. Les intellectuels chinois ont principalement suivi et réinterprété systématiquement ce discours officiel tout en abordant rarement des sujets plus sensibles comme les réformes politiques et la démocratie. De plus, il est intéressant de noter que le public chinois a sa propre idée du concept de délibération et sa propre logique comportementale envers elle, ce qui remodèle culturellement la compréhension de la démocratie délibérative chinoise de base...

Le chapitre quatre se concentre sur l'institutionnalisation de la consultation et de la délibération autoritaires. L'institutionnalisation a plusieurs significations dans les démocraties et les autocraties. Elle est principalement liée à la modernisation, de sorte qu'une méthode institutionnalisée peut également être adoptée par les dirigeants autoritaires pour consolider et renforcer l'autoritarisme par le biais d'institutions légitimées et (in) formelles. Des institutions consultatives spéciales comme le C/LPPCC et le United Front Work, ainsi que diverses formes informelles de communication et d'interaction (par exemple, liées par des coutumes, des habitudes, des règles et des conventions tacites) canalisent la communication ascendante et donnent aux gens leur mot à dire. La consultation et la délibération institutionnalisées sont mises en évidence par le PCC dans son plan de modernisation qui minimise les élections, car une telle approche peut efficacement faire face aux incertitudes sociales et aux soulèvements en sondant et en analysant les préférences du public.

Le chapitre cinq passe au niveau pratique, avec la présentation d'études de cas. Ces analyses empiriques de la gouvernance consultative et délibérative de la Chine reposent sur un long travail ethnographique de terrain couvrant les différences géographiques, politiques et hiérarchiques de la consultation législative et des délibérations à la base (village). Ces cas ne peuvent représenter de manière exhaustive toutes les occasions de gouvernance, surtout compte tenu du développement inégal d'un pays aussi grand que la Chine. Néanmoins, mes analyses empiriques indiquent en outre à quoi ressemble la gouvernance consultative et délibérative dans l'autoritarisme et comment elle fonctionne. La consultation législative correspond à un processus descendant de collecte publique des préférences et d'analyse. J'explique comment ce jeu entre les principales parties prenantes fonctionne au sein de la législation autoritaire chinoise. Alors que la délibération du village chinois est en quelque sorte prescrite, des formes plus authentiques surviennent avec l'incorporation de nombreux influenceurs traditionnels et culturels.

Introduction

“Deliberative democracy” refers to efforts, in both theory and practice, to reconcile the value of deliberation with other core democratic principles, such as political equality and the avoidance of “tyranny of the majority.” These efforts engage normative concerns about whether deliberation is worth achieving, and at what cost, in terms of other, apparently conflicting values. Deliberative democracy also engages empirical issues about whether more deliberation would make much difference and about the kinds of institutions that might better realize deliberative democracy.

- James S. Fishkin, 2008

Democratic decision making should be made without any “domination via the exercise of power, manipulation, indoctrination, propaganda, deception, expressions of mere self-interest, threats, and the imposition of ideological conformity”.

-John S. Dryzek, 1998

Democracy does not consist of a single unique set of institutions. There are many types of democracy, and their diverse practices produce a similarly varied set of effects. The specific form democracy takes is contingent upon a country’s socioeconomic conditions as well as its entrenched state structures and policy practices...Modern democracy, in other words, offers a variety of competitive processes and channels for the expression of interests and values associational as well as partisan, functional as well as territorial, collective as well as individual. All are integral to its practice.

-Schmitter and Karl, 1991

Clarification conceptuelle de certains concepts clés :

Pour commencer, plusieurs concepts doivent être clairement définis car ces approches conceptuelles se retrouvent tout au long de cette thèse. Ce sont l’Occident, l’indigénisation, la démocratie consultative et la démocratie délibérative, les généalogies dans la démocratie délibérative et la gouvernance consultative/délibérative.

L’Occident : L’Occident en soi ne se réfère pas à un état spécifique mais à un ensemble d’États avec un degré élevé d’auto-identification qui se distingue de l’Orient ou d’un autre non-occidental. Marshall et Williams (1982, p78) différencient la définition entre l’Occident et le reste du monde dans leur livre de Great Map of Mankind. Ce concept culturel et géographique initial de l’Occident élargit son champ d’application de l’Europe occidentale

à l'Europe centrale, nord et sud à la suite de l'expansion du christianisme. Les Lumières modernes ont affaibli le rôle de la religion dans la sphère publique et ont facilité la politisation du concept-Occidental. Certaines idées de base comme la démocratie, la liberté, l'égalité et le gouvernement constitutionnel ont alors été proposés. Depuis, ce concept d'Occident a subi un processus de temporalisation et de spatialisation (Zhang, 2020) parallèlement au développement économique rapide. L'Occident ne se limite pas géographiquement à l'Europe, il fait référence aux États ou régions où la civilisation occidentale prend racine. Les États-Unis, le Canada, l'Australie et la Nouvelle-Zélande, par exemple, ont également rejoint ce rang. Après la Seconde Guerre mondiale, cette notion est finalement devenue un concept politique qui incarne la culture transatlantique de l'Europe et de l'Amérique (du nord). Le concept d'Occident utilisé dans cette thèse se réfère principalement (mais sans s'y limiter) au type Anglo-Saxon.

Indigénisation : Le plus souvent, la traduction d'une langue à une autre implique ce qu'on a appelé une indigénisation (*bentubua* 本土化), ou ce qu'on appelle dans le contexte indien une vernacularisation. C'est un processus qui n'est pas réductible à une traduction neutre, car il inscrit un concept ou une idée élaborée dans un cadre spécifique (dans le cas présent, l'académie internationale dominée par la littérature anglo-américaine et principalement écrite dans la lingua franca anglaise) dans un autre cadre cognitif local, lui donnant de nouvelles significations. Un tel processus d'indigénisation dans le contexte chinois est double, il ne se réfère pas seulement à un processus indigénisé de théories étrangères, mais se réfère également à certaines théories locales construites spontanément, en particulier au cours des deux dernières décennies.

Démocratie consultative et démocratie délibérative : l'idée d'un gouvernement légitime devrait intégrer la 'volonté du peuple' apparaît sous de nombreuses variantes. C'est aussi ce riche patrimoine qui facilite le concept de démocratie délibérative. Depuis sa première proposition, cette idée est toujours enchevêtrée avec d'autres formes démocratiques (ou synonymies) comme la démocratie représentative et la démocratie participative dans le premier chapitre, la délibération autoritaire et la consultation autoritaire dans le deuxième chapitre et la démocratie consultative dans le troisième chapitre. Par conséquent, une approche ordonnée de cette diversité dans la démocratie permettra une meilleure compréhension de la démocratie délibérative. Parmi ces concepts un peu déroutants, je me concentrerai tout d'abord sur la différenciation de la démocratie consultative et de la démocratie délibérative.

Depuis les travaux pionniers de Bessette, Joseph M. (1980), des psychologues sociaux et plus récemment des politologues et des démocrates, tous ont adopté l'idée que la prise de décision démocratique et légitimée ne peut être produite que par un dialogue avec le peuple et ce dialogue peut être mieux décrit comme une démocratie délibérative. Parmi de nombreux critères, les dimensions clés de la démocratie délibérative se réfèrent à la manière dont une transformation est réalisée de la 'prise de décision agrégative' (dépouillement) à des discussions égales et inclusives. Dans ce processus, les individus sont impliqués non seulement dans les résultats finaux mais avec le processus menant à ces résultats. Le plus souvent, la démocratie délibérative est liée à l'autonomisation du public et à une idée démocratique plus radicale. Un concept de démocratie consultative semble paradoxal dans son terme, puisque la consultation, bien que fréquemment utilisée en politique, est rarement liée à la prise de décision démocratique. La consultation, telle qu'elle est définie, fait référence à la consultation des préférences (en particulier à grande échelle) à sens unique. Un concept de démocratie consultative relie cette 'collecte des préférences' à la prise de décision démocratique et cela n'a de sens que lorsque ce lien est positif ; néanmoins, ce processus manque d'autonomisation et le public est passivement impliqué dans le processus de prise de décision.

Généalogies dans la démocratie délibérative : La démocratie délibérative, depuis sa première proposition, a traversé plusieurs générations. Par conséquent, une analyse généalogique est théoriquement utile pour appréhender les derniers centres d'intérêt des études sur la démocratie délibérative. Par exemple, la première génération propose les standards normatifs de la démocratie délibérative, la deuxième génération se concentre davantage sur l'opérabilité de la théorie, et la troisième génération explore un tournant empirique (avec un accent particulier sur le système délibératif).

Gouvernance consultative/délibérative : Suite à certains éléments clés du concept de démocratie délibérative et de démocratie consultative, la gouvernance consiste à transférer cet idéal dans la pratique. Le plus souvent, une méthode de gouvernance consultative/délibérative est difficile à distinguer complètement dans la vie politique réelle et ce n'est pas seulement parce que la gouvernance dans la pratique est généralement présentée sous une forme complexe et hybride associant la participation, la consultation et la délibération du public; mais aussi parce que nous avons des normes différentes pour mesurer le caractère délibératif dans un processus de gouvernance, une partition théorique peut avoir de nombreux chevauchements dans la pratique réelle. Il convient également de noter que la

gouvernance dans différents contextes culturels peut favoriser différentes approches pour parvenir à la soi-disant ‘bonne gouvernance’ (comme décrit dans le cinquième chapitre). Néanmoins, même une approche de gouvernance consultative/délibérative est fréquemment préconisée dans la gouvernance moderne, elle doit encore co-fonctionner avec une autre méthode comme le vote.

Remarque : il y a des nuances dans l’utilisation de ces termes dans différents contextes. Ces différences ne sont pas seulement présentées dans les traductions linguistiques, sémantiques ou rhétoriques, mais aussi dans des connotations qui se dotent de contextes spécifiques. Très typiquement, la démocratie délibérative en Chine fait référence au discours démocratique et à la forme de gouvernance sous la direction du PCC. Dans ce contexte, j’ai utilisé ces termes différemment et respectivement dans diverses circonstances.

La Chine a attiré de plus en plus l’attention au cours des dernières décennies. Les deux aspects positifs comme la croissance économique rapide et l’innovation gouvernementale, et certains aspects négatifs comme la recentralisation croissante et la violation des droits de l’homme ont été largement commentés. Quelle qu’en soit la raison, le mot-clé Chine apparaît de plus en plus dans l’arène politique mondiale. Si l’engouement pour les études chinoises dans l’enseignement supérieur, notamment en Occident, reste modéré ; c’est la peur de la Chine, et les restrictions qu’elle impose, qui sont en partie à blâmer. Ce que j’ai remarqué, c’est que les études chinoises se polarisent entre la Chine et l’Occident. Les universitaires chinois se concentrent de plus en plus sur les études politiques socialistes aux caractéristiques chinoises. Ce changement est basé sur la confiance apportée par la puissance croissante de la Chine. Néanmoins, cela comporte également des risques de repli sur soi. Les spécialistes de la Chine occidentale remettent en question la simple dichotomie démocratie-autoritarisme, mais leurs analyses ne sont pas toutes dépourvues de perspectives idéologiques.

Il faut davantage de recherche politique pour jeter des ponts entre ces deux parties. L’influence de la Chine ne peut plus être marginalisée ou simplement ignorée. Aux yeux du monde extérieur, la réforme politique de la Chine est loin derrière son développement économique, et ce système politique autoritaire à parti unique a été constamment critiqué. Néanmoins, ces politiciens, théoriciens et démocrates pragmatiques ont commencé à se concentrer sur la résilience et le maintien autoritaire de la Chine (par exemple Gilley, 2003 ; Nathan, 2017 ; Fewsmith et Nathan, 2019) plutôt que d’abandonner le paradigme de la ‘transition démocratique de la Chine’ (Gilley, 2004 ; Minxin, 2006 ; Diamond, 2008). Dans

ce méli-mélo théorique, outre l'idée de Nathan d'institutionnalisation du régime du PCC, le concept de démocratie délibérative et de gouvernance est crucial. Des indices traçables peuvent être trouvés dans le cadrage officiel chinois avec une minimisation de la méthode électorale (démocratie) tout en mettant à nouveau l'accent sur une approche délibérative plus pragmatique dans son discours démocratique et sa gouvernance.

Il est méthodologiquement impossible de pencher complètement vers l'un ou l'autre camp. J'ai donc l'ambition de relier et de réconcilier davantage les études politiques chinoises et occidentales et de faciliter une compréhension globale des changements politiques de la Chine contemporaine. Ces efforts visent à apporter des réponses à de nombreux défis, par exemple la xénophobie et l'eurocentrisme. Dans cette interaction, même si les conflits sont voués à persister, une meilleure compréhension mutuelle peut être encouragée des deux côtés. Les efforts dans ce sens ne sont évidemment pas suffisants. Gardant toutes ces doctrines à l'esprit, mes travaux ont mené à une justification approfondie de la démocratie délibérative de la Chine sur la base de la politique comparée entre la Chine et l'Occident, avec le premier effort pour clarifier ses significations conceptuelles et théoriques, puis appliquer davantage cette idée dans des études empiriques. L'objectif est d'une part de mettre en évidence la gouvernance chinoise orientée pragmatique et efficace, et d'autre part d'examiner comment cette bonne gouvernance joue un rôle dans la résilience autoritaire.

Dans ce contexte, ma thèse se concentre sur le sujet de la démocratie délibérative de la Chine (*xieshang minzhu* 协商民主) avec trois parties : I, la démocratie délibérative en Occident (chapitre un), II, une réévaluation très conceptuelle de la démocratie délibérative chinoise (*xieshang minzhu* 协商民主) (chapitre deux, trois et quatre) et III, études de cas sur la gouvernance délibérative chinoise (chapitre cinq). Mon objectif est de définir en profondeur la démocratie délibérative de la Chine, en particulier sur le plan conceptuel. Cela me paraît crucial pour les études politiques chinoises contemporaines. Le premier accent est mis sur le débat cohérent entre l'occidentalisation et l'indigénisation. Au cours des trois dernières décennies, les disputes entre les responsables chinois, les universitaires et le grand public sont restées non résolues et parfois contrecarrées. Alors que la situation s'améliore avec la confiance croissante dans les études chinoises indigénisées, de nombreuses expressions étiquetées '...avec des caractéristiques chinoises (*zhongguo te'se* 中国特色)' indiquent clairement une telle tendance. Néanmoins, cela conduit à une autre situation difficile : l'accent excessif porté sur le caractère unique de la Chine rend la politique

chinoise incompatible et parfois non conciliable avec les doctrines occidentales, pire encore, laissant certains concepts politiques ambigus.

1.1 Démocratie délibérative anglo-américaine

Les deux dernières décennies de théorie politique ont placé la délibération publique au premier plan et au centre de l'évaluation de la démocratie et le tournant délibératif a incité un grand nombre de théoriciens politiques à convenir que la délibération est l'idéal régulateur autour duquel une politique plus démocratique et plus humaine devrait être reconstruite. De plus, la démocratie délibérative pour beaucoup était précisément sa promesse d'aller au-delà des limites du libéralisme et de retrouver l'idéal démocratique plus fort que le gouvernement devait incarner la « volonté du peuple » via le raisonnement public (Habermas, 1979 ; Barber, 1984) plutôt que l'agrégation des préférences. Le livre *Deliberative Democracy and Beyond : Liberals, Critics, Contestations* de Dryzek (2002, p27) fournit une carte claire et utile de ce terrain intellectuel. Il affirme que « l'essence de la légitimité démocratique doit prendre en considération la délibération authentique dans le processus de prise de décision ». Au-delà de cet aspect normatif une grande partie de la délibération et de son rôle dans la politique empirique reste vivement contestée, comme la manière dont les théoriciens répondent à des questions telles que : ce qui compte comme délibération, qui devrait participer à la délibération, quels types de discours sont ainsi autorisés dans l'arène délibérative, et quelles institutions promeuvent le mieux la délibération. Ces questions séparent ces théoriciens en des camps étonnamment nuancés et qui se chevauchent.

Généralement, des démocrates comme Mansbridge, Rosenberg, Mouffe et McDonnell préconisent différentes versions de la démocratie délibérative ; tout d'abord, confronter les déficits démocratiques dans les sociétés libérales en réévaluant de manière critique son cadre individualiste et rationaliste (Mouffe, 2013), et ensuite rechercher de nouvelles significations pour reformuler davantage l'idée classique de démocratie. En conséquence, la théorie de la démocratie délibérative est devenue un concept plus mature. Simultanément, de nombreuses études empiriques ont également enrichi sa signification conceptuelle et son utilisation pragmatique avec de nouvelles découvertes : par exemple, la pleine prise en compte d'une plus grande diversité de formes de communication telles que le témoignage (Sanders, 1997), la narration, l'accueil et la rhétorique (Young, 1996 ; Black, 2008), l'intelligence émotionnelle (Griffin, 2012) et le discours quotidien (Mansbridge, 1999 ; Harris-Lacewell, 2004). Des études plus récentes se sont concentrées sur

l'institutionnalisation de la délibération (par exemple Hendriks, 2002 ; Fung et Wright, 2003 ; Reid, 2012 ; Johnson et Gastil, 2015) et le récent tournant systémique de la démocratie délibérative (par exemple Niemeyer, Neblo, Steenbergen et Steiner, 2010 ; Mansbridge et al., 2012 ; Friess et Eilders, 2015 ; Owen et Smith, 2015) qui facilite une étude plus pratique sur la démocratie délibérative.

Les appels à une étude de la démocratie délibérative plus terre à terre ont conduit à repenser la recherche actuelle, c'est-à-dire comment appliquer ce concept dans les activités politiques quotidiennes et aller au-delà des idéaux, des conditions et des procédures contrefactuelles. Ces considérations se réfèrent à la manière d'envisager systématiquement la démocratie délibérative et comment la délibération ou la démocratie délibérative peut être menée à grande échelle. Ce plan montre une grande miséricorde avec une réflexion au-delà des éléments fondamentaux de la *raison* et du *bien commun* dans la démocratie délibérative et suppose un lien complémentaire entre les sites individuels dans un tel système. Disons qu'une telle conception remédie à certains problèmes empiriques et de légitimité dans des circonstances défavorables. Néanmoins, pour les chercheurs les plus critiques, la question la plus centrale est de savoir si une conception de système délibératif peut encore améliorer un développement conceptuel et normatif de la démocratie délibérative. Comme le supposent Owen et Smith (2015), un tel système délibératif néglige potentiellement la signification normative des pratiques entre les citoyens et de la répartition des capacités délibératives et du respect mutuel. La deuxième préoccupation est de savoir comment renforcer la connexion et l'interaction entre les différentes parties, qui décidera de la redistribution du pouvoir dans le système délibératif, etc. De tels dilemmes entravent une utilisation pragmatique de la démocratie délibérative.

Rostboll (2008) dans *Délibératif liberté : Démocratie délibérative comme théorie critique* explique que :

For better understanding deliberative democracy as a critical theory that should go beyond the debate among the different authors within factions both in theory and practice, to note, merits of deliberation are not merely to accommodate and uphold those preexisting differences, more preciously, to initiate processes of reflection about policies that are uncritically accepted by most people. This approach is going further to tale public deliberation from 'accommodation' to 'emancipation', inside of which open a window for potential of comprehensive deliberation to achieve its emancipatory aims.

(Rostboll, 2008 p.113)

Ces considérations offrent de nombreuses possibilités et potentialités pour repenser davantage les mérites normatifs et empiriques de la démocratie délibérative. Simultanément, les théoriciens pragmatiques commencent à se pencher sur la délibération dans un contexte politique plus large, par exemple, à la fois dans des systèmes démocratiques et autoritaires. Ces débats cohérents propulsent la démocratie délibérative dans une théorie à l'épreuve du temps avec de riches significations pratiques.

1.2 Démocratie délibérative chinoise (Xieshang Minzhu 协商民主)

La science politique chinoise au sens de l'indigénisation des concepts et théories politiques n'a été rétablie qu'au tout début de ce siècle. Son évolution politique antérieure reposait sur la politique soviétique (les trois premières décennies après la fondation de la Nouvelle Chine) et la politique américaine (les trois décennies après la réforme et l'ouverture en 1978). Dans le nouveau siècle, ces sciences politiques étrangères sont de plus en plus incapables d'expliquer et de soutenir le développement de la politique chinoise. Ainsi, un appel à la science politique chinoise indigénisée a été mis à l'ordre du jour dans ce contexte. Néanmoins, cela ne peut en aucun cas permettre de conclure que ce type de politique isole la Chine des politiques occidentales. Bien que la propagande officielle chinoise et certains intellectuels insistent pour se démarquer de la politique occidentale, il est toujours plus sage de penser la politique chinoise de manière plus critique et à travers un filtre comparatif. Gardant ces tendances à l'esprit, une réévaluation conceptuelle de la démocratie délibérative de la Chine (*xieshang minzhu* 协商民主) est menée en dressant un panorama de ce numéro spécial du point de vue des études sur la Chine occidentale et des études chinoises. Mon étude s'appuie en outre sur une analyse approfondie des études sur la délibération autoritaire, la consultation autoritaire dans les études de la Chine occidentale et la démocratie consultative et, au-delà, dans les universités chinoises.

1.2.1 Délibération autoritaire

Pendant une décennie, certains théoriciens de la délibération ont commencé à déplacer leur attention des études orthodoxes anglo-américaines sur la démocratie délibérative vers la perspective non occidentale plus actuelle de l'autoritarisme. Ces efforts vont au-delà d'une simple analyse dichotomique entre autoritarisme et démocratie en enquêtant sur la délibération (démocratie délibérative) dans des régimes autoritaires comme la Chine par exemple. He et Warren (2006, 2011, 2012, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018) ont reformulé et reconstruit le concept de « délibération autoritaire » en revisitant plus avant la délibération et la démocratie dans différents contextes politiques. Les observateurs occidentaux

hésitent à accepter cette possibilité et concluent qu'il peut y avoir des possibilités de communication rationnelle au sein d'un régime politique autoritaire qui viole de manière flagrante les droits de l'homme. Cela a inévitablement conduit à des doutes sur la nature démocratique de ce qui s'est passé en Chine (O'Flynn et Curato, 2015 ; Weber et Froehlich, 2016). Ce concept remet en effet en question à la fois la définition anglo-américaine monogénétiq ue de la démocratie délibérative et les principes orthodoxes de gouvernance et de pratique délibérative en Occident.

Le travail de He Baogang a suscité de vifs débats. Ces discussions sont basées sur la coexistence apparemment paradoxale entre délibération et autoritarisme, de la construction théorique à la gouvernance délibérative empirique et à l'innovation. Habituellement, cela inclut une analyse culturelle et historique pour rechercher davantage de sources morales et politiques indigénisées : les études politiques comparatives pour mettre davantage en évidence la supériorité de la démocratie délibérative chinoise, les études de cas délibératives concrètes (le plus souvent au niveau local), par exemple, délibération autoritaire sur Internet chinois, village, communauté, etc. Ces preuves empiriques florissantes améliorent encore la compréhension de la délibération autoritaire à la fois théoriquement et pratiquement. Néanmoins, la vulnérabilité conceptuelle est également évidente si l'autoritarisme permet toujours ou parfois une délibération authentique au niveau de la base. Si ces cas existants (ils sont appelés délibératifs) peuvent être suffisamment forts pour justifier le fait que des possibilités délibératives peuvent vraiment exister en l'absence de démocratisation du régime (He, 2011). Le concept de « délibération autoritaire » doit être auto-évolué de manière critique à la fois dans ses composantes normative et empirique pour devenir une théorie éprouvée par le temps. Pour le moment, considérer tous ces éléments comme de la délibération serait rendre les choses faciles pour le PCC.

Le concept de délibération autoritaire a donc ouvert une fenêtre pour mieux comprendre la démocratie délibérative, la gouvernance et le changement politique de la Chine. Je voudrais tirer deux conclusions provisoires. Premièrement, cette délibération autoritaire n'existe qu'à la base et est adoptée principalement pour des raisons pragmatiques. C'est-à-dire que les fonctionnaires et le grand public utilisent la délibération pour résoudre des problèmes pratiques. Ce côté fonctionnaliste de la délibération a à voir avec leur besoin de faire face à de nombreuses incertitudes descendantes et ascendantes. Deuxièmement, il est plutôt juste de conclure qu'une telle délibération autoritaire renforce un autoritarisme plus

résilient plutôt que de conduire à la démocratisation par l'autonomisation du public. Cette interaction déroutante est habilement gérée par le PCC à la fois dans sa propagande idéologique et sa gouvernance.

1.2.2 Consultation autoritaire

Le concept de consultation autoritaire a d'abord été proposé par He et Thogersen (2010, p23), puis développé par He et Warren (2011) et Teets (2013). Il a finalement été résumé par Truex (2018) avec la description suivante : le PCC est le pionnier de sa propre marque d'autoritarisme consultatif, c'est-à-dire que les citoyens chinois ne peuvent pas voter pour la direction du PCC ou même leurs représentants dans le CNP, alors que le régime a introduit une série de nouvelles « institutions de contribution » pour accroître la voix du public sur des questions politiques spécifiques (Voir aussi Nathan, 2003). Bien qu'elle puisse se confondre partiellement avec la délibération autoritaire, la consultation autoritaire se réfère toujours à une activité politique plus prudente et plus facile à contrôler. Telle que définie par He et Warren (2011), la consultation autoritaire est « une forme de règle dans laquelle les détenteurs du pouvoir utilisent la communication pour recueillir les préférences de ceux que leurs décisions vont affecter et prennent ces préférences en compte en tant qu'informations pertinentes pour leur prise de décision ». L'introduction d'un ensemble de canaux participatifs limités permet de se défouler et de reporter un changement plus global. Il permet au régime d'apprendre quelque chose des suggestions des citoyens, mais de garder un contrôle total sur le discours politique. Ces canaux participatifs ne peuvent pas être considérés comme pleinement délibératifs, car le régime n'est en aucun cas tenu d'intégrer la contribution des citoyens (He et Thogersen, 2010 ; He et Warren, 2011).

Sans aucun doute, les deux concepts de délibération autoritaire et de consultation autoritaire revendiquent la nature non démocratique de la politique chinoise. Ils refusent de reconnaître un virage démocratique par de telles méthodes consultatives et délibératives, malgré l'existence de certains concepts participatifs, consultatifs et délibératifs émergents et innovants en Chine. Si la qualité délibérative de ces pratiques de base est controversée, le concept de consultation autoritaire contient plus de prudence et de critique de l'autoritarisme chinois. Les chercheurs qui recourent à ce dernier concept se concentrent davantage sur les changements politiques qui ont lieu aux niveaux administratifs supérieurs en Chine, aux niveaux central et provincial en particulier, dans certains domaines clés, la législation et les réformes politiques nationales. Cette approche consultative, souvent appelée la *troisième voie* (He, 2010, 2011), doit être différenciée à la fois d'une délibération

très habilitante et d'une consultation et d'une mobilisation politiques rigides. Il est plus efficace dans les grandes occasions d'élaboration de politiques.

Une fois de plus, ces conceptions consultatives sont également adoptées pour renforcer l'autoritarisme. Bien que le régime chinois parle favorablement de la démocratie consultative, ses efforts pour diffuser les expériences de réforme locale dans ce domaine sont très limités. Son attitude à leur égard est prudente et elle aime s'assurer que ces réformes sont fermement sous contrôle central. En ce sens, en fait, nous assistons à un processus de renouvellement et d'affinement de l'autoritarisme à travers des mécanismes consultatifs. Une telle méthode est mise en avant pour la bonne gouvernance, la responsabilité et la réactivité. C'est un processus réciproque, d'une part, la coercition autoritaire du PCC peut être apprivoisée et régulée par certains arrangements institutionnels. À son tour, selon He et Warren (2006), la consultation aide à identifier et à articuler la préférence des personnes, ce qui permet au PCC d'acquérir la capacité de légitimer les politiques en se référant à des processus consultatifs relativement inclusifs. Jusqu'à présent, de telles interactions ont toujours lieu et ne peuvent être simplement négligées et marginalisées dans les études de résilience autoritaires chinoises.

1.2.3 Démocratie Consultative (Xieshang Minzhu 协商民主) et au-delà

Il semble que le régime chinois n'ait pas été trop empêtré dans la réinterprétation de la démocratie délibérative. Le Bureau central de compilation et de traduction le traduit en démocratie consultative (*xieshang minzhu* 协商民主), au mieux, évitant davantage certaines ambiguïtés conceptuelles. La démocratie consultative en Chine a déjà une signification politique spécifique. Ce n'est pas une démocratie délibérative au sens occidental, mais une forme de démocratie populaire sous la direction du PCC, qui s'inspire de la culture traditionnelle chinoise et qui a été pratiquée à travers la CCPPC et le travail du Front uni.

Il faut souligner que dans le cadre officiel, la démocratie consultative a deux dimensions fondamentales : tout d'abord, la coopération multipartite et le système de consultation politique sous la direction du PCC ; le second fait référence au système de concertation et de dialogue social. D'une part, le PCC insiste sur la nécessité de consultations politiques parmi les élites en particulier, mais pas exclusivement, et aussi avec d'autres partis officiellement reconnus ; d'autre part, il étend la consultation politique et parfois sociale aux citoyens ordinaires. Cette idée de démocratie consultative tend à remplacer (et se confond parfois avec) l'idée maoïste de la ligne de masse : le Parti et les gouvernements aux niveaux national et local doivent avoir un contact étroit et développer en permanence

un dialogue direct avec les masses.

Une autre préoccupation est la légitimité consultative. Une tradition de longue date dans les sciences sociales a favorisé une forme de délibération plus interactive pour justifier à la fois la procédure (e.g. Karni et Safra, 2002 ; Tyler, 2006 ; Trautmann, 2009 ; Krawczyk, 2011) et la légitimité qui en résulte (Lind et Tyler, 1988 ; Olken, 2010). La connaissance et l'enthousiasme sur ces sources de légitimité limitée semblent toutefois marginaliser certains autres axes, par exemple la démocratie consultative. Le PCC a reformulé ce concept de démocratie en ajoutant de nouvelles significations. Premièrement, une telle idée puise des inspirations dans les traditions et cultures chinoises. À ce jour, les dynasties chinoises ont hérité d'une longue tradition de monarques consultant les ministres sur les affaires de l'État. Même si ces consultations étaient inégales et superficielles, le pouvoir le plus élevé était exercé après quelques consultations. Le confucianisme préconise également que le pouvoir soit limité par le peuple. Cette consultation très hiérarchisée (ignorance procédurale avec un seul accent sur les résultats) est encore très courante dans la démocratie consultative contemporaine. Dans le cadre politique moderne, le renforcement idéologique du PCC et les mobilisations et mouvements de masse de Mao ont également remodelé cette consultation et indiqué que de telles formes devraient être monopolisées par l'État.

Deuxièmement, l'égalité de participation et de délibération n'est pas une condition sine qua non de la démocratie consultative. Le concept de démocratie consultative rend le leadership absolu et la consultation du PCC moins inconciliables. Pendant ce temps, une telle idée poursuit la logique pratique du Parti communiste, c'est-à-dire résoudre les incertitudes et parvenir à une bonne gouvernance en collectant et en analysant davantage les préférences du public (Zheng, 2009). Cette interaction permet non seulement d'atteindre les objectifs pratiques susmentionnés, mais également de consolider la légitimité du PCC en améliorant les performances (Brødsgaard et Zheng Eds., 2006 ; Landry, Lü et Duan, 2018). La consultation et la bonne gouvernance sont les principales sources de légitimité des régimes autoritaires contemporains.

Lorsque la Chine est mentionnée dans le domaine des sciences humaines et sociales, de nombreux auteurs associent inconsciemment la Chine à l'autoritarisme et associent nombre des conceptions institutionnelles à la surveillance, au monopole, à l'habillage de vitrines et à l'approbation sans discussion (par exemple, la CCPPC). C'est certainement correct. Néanmoins, ce cadre analytique oppose de plus en plus la Chine à ces démocraties occidentales et ne parvient pas à expliquer le maintien de l'autoritarisme chinois et son

renforcement autoritaire. Si telle est la vérité, les études chinoises pragmatiques devraient envisager et prendre en considération davantage les consultations avec la gouvernance et les formes démocratiques qui en découlent pour mieux comprendre les changements politiques de la Chine.

1.3 Gouvernance consultative/délibérative avec études de cas

Les trois dernières décennies, les démocraties ont été confrontées au défi de la transformation de la gouvernance, à savoir comment maîtriser et équilibrer la relation entre la participation et les délibérations publiques et un gouvernement fort. Cette tendance est abordée par la gouvernance délibérative, et une telle approche répond aux deux dilemmes : comment faire face à la gamme toujours croissante de problèmes sociaux (Dryzek, 2012) d'une part, et remédier à certaines critiques particulièrement vives contre la gouvernance représentative d'autre part. Au cours des dernières décennies, la gouvernance délibérative dans les démocraties libérales a connu un 'virage discursif' en plusieurs lieux et diverses occasions en renforçant encore l'interaction entre les représentés et leurs représentants, les électeurs et les élus. Dans la Chine autoritaire, la gouvernance délibérative prend principalement une forme dirigée par le gouvernement, ainsi que certains types de délibérations publiques non structurées et informelles (Tang, 2015). Ces efforts amènent le public à des activités politiques, notamment par l'expression de préoccupations publiques, de débats informels et de discours contestés, avec des impacts limités sur la prise de décision.

Contrairement aux promoteurs de la démocratie libérale conventionnelle qui ont tendance à rechercher l'effondrement du régime autoritaire et les élections compétitives qui s'ensuivent, certains spécialistes de la démocratie délibérative considèrent la démocratisation étatique de pays comme la Chine comme un processus de renforcement des capacités démocratiques par la délibération (Dryzek, 2009). Cette école d'études sur la Chine (principalement les démocrates délibératifs et les sinologues entourant le pionnier He Baogang officiellement basés à l'Université australienne Deakin et maintenant l'Université nationale de Singapour) a favorisé une approche délibérative qui peut être l'élan potentiel de l'autonomisation du public. Par exemple, la ligne de masse qui relie le public à l'État facilite les interactions entre ces participants pour de nombreuses raisons et maintient une pression hiérarchique descendante ou une démocratisation spontanée ascendante. Néanmoins, cette perspective optimiste est devenue de plus en plus incertaine, en particulier à l'époque de Xi, qui tente de reconstruire une stabilité intérieure et une

discipline politique à toute épreuve. Par conséquent, mon approche de la gouvernance consultative et délibérative de la Chine se focalise sur les facilités accordées par l'autoritarisme du PCC et considère l'autonomisation du public et la démocratisation ascendante (le cas échéant) comme des sous-produits potentiels de ce processus.

Pour justifier davantage mes diagnostics, j'ai effectué un travail de terrain de six mois en Chine de 2017 à 2021. Je me suis principalement concentré sur deux études de cas, la consultation législative et la délibération villageoise. Mon effort à travers la présentation de ces deux cas n'est pas de souligner le caractère unique de la pratique chinoise, mais plutôt de réconcilier certains récits et doctrines occidentaux avec la pratique chinoise, qui à son tour peut également faire référence à la pratique occidentale dans une certaine mesure. Une telle approche peut atténuer l'antagonisme entre les deux camps. Compte tenu de la complexité des conditions réelles de la Chine, mes cas ne peuvent rendre compte de la richesse des diverses pratiques, ils peuvent néanmoins être le signe de nouveaux changements politiques dans la politique chinoise.

O'Brien (2011) et de nombreux sinologues comme Harding (1993), Cabestan (2007), Baum (2007), Perry (2008), Alpermann (2009) et Cho (2009) ont tous averti que les études politiques chinoises, en particulier le travail de terrain, devraient traiter avec soin des études de cas uniques sans négliger la vue d'ensemble. Cela signifie néanmoins que la gouvernance consultative et délibérative chinoise, d'une part, garantit certaines formes fondamentales d'interactions entre et parmi l'État et la société et d'autre part, au lieu de rajeunir la citoyenneté et d'autonomiser les citoyens, cette gouvernance atténue la tension apportée par le pouvoir monopolistique autoritaire en consultant et en délibérant avec le peuple facilitant davantage la résilience autoritaire de la Chine.

1.4 Méthodologies

Pour faciliter davantage mon analyse du concept et de la pratique de la démocratie délibérative chinoise, j'ai donc adopté l'analyse du discours et l'étude de cas comme méthodologies. Une analyse du discours est théoriquement et normativement utile pour comprendre comment ce concept de démocratie délibérative naît dans un contexte riche d'un héritage culturel et historique chinois, et de nouvelles significations théoriques et pratiques après la reformulation du PCC dans la Chine contemporaine. Les études de cas ne peuvent avoir que des implications plus pratiques et conduire à un concept de délibération plus clair et plus profond. Mon étude de cas est basée sur certaines méthodes anthropologiques et ethnographiques comme les entretiens individuels et de groupes de

discussion, la généalogie et l'analyse des archives, l'analyse contextuelle (rhétorique, sémantique, linguistique) sur les documents et règlements du parti. Ces efforts sont mis en évidence pour démêler les interactions complexes entre et parmi le Parti, l'État et la société, ainsi que les implications instrumentales pour la démocratie délibérative en Chine.

1.4.1 Analyse du discours

De nombreux théoriciens du discours présentent un contrepoint à l'idéal normatif Habermassien de la rationalité communicative. Le discours, disent-ils, devrait être examiné en termes de ce qui est réellement fait (plutôt que de ce qui devrait être fait) (voir aussi Flyvbjerg, 1998). De ce qui est fait, les analystes du discours visent à identifier ce qui a influencé la façon dont un problème est défini. Dans leurs analyses, ils incluent les éléments qui ne sont pas pour la plupart un sujet de dialogue, mais qui créent des possibilités pour les acteurs d'agir et/ou de créer des limites à ce qui peut légitimement être fait (Hajer et Versteeg, 2005). Ainsi, le discours ne porte pas seulement sur la manière dont les idées sont formulées dans les mots ou la discussion, il fait également référence aux pratiques dans lesquelles des manières spécifiques de regarder les choses sont intégrées (Hajer, 1995). Selon le cadrage de Hajers ce qui rend l'analyse du discours se réfère à :

A specific ensemble of ideas, concepts, and categorizations that are being produced, reproduced and transformed in a particular set of practices and through which meaning is given to physical and social realities.

(Hajer, 1995 p.517)

En conséquence, l'analyse du discours prévaut tout au long de la thèse. Elle n'inclut pas seulement l'analyse de la connotation de la démocratie délibérative anglo-américaine principalement, mais surtout, la méthodologie adoptée permet de comprendre le discours chinois avec d'autres analyses sémantiques, linguistiques, rhétoriques et conceptuelles concrètes. Simultanément, cette analyse du discours est menée avec une perspective politique comparative entre la Chine et l'Occident, l'indigénisation et l'occidentalisation.

1.4.2 Étude de cas

Afin de clarifier et d'appliquer ce discours chinois dans la pratique, j'ai mené un travail de terrain politique de six mois en Chine. Cela comprend des entretiens, des analyses de généalogies locales, des documents administratifs et politiques. Pour ce faire, dans le cas de la consultation législative, j'ai interviewé 24 fonctionnaires de la Cour et du gouvernement de Huizhou et j'ai eu accès à des réunions internes par le biais de liens

préétablis avec le Tribunal populaire intermédiaire de Huizhou, le Bureau de la construction urbaine, le Comité législatif du Congrès du peuple, et le HPPCC. De plus, j'ai accédé à d'autres règles du précédent des autres villes de la province du Guangdong. Dans le deuxième cas de délibération villageoise, j'ai principalement traité avec les gouvernements de base, les cadres locaux et les villageois, cela comprend les districts de Kenli et de Liji, la ville de Shengtuo et 16 villages sous leur juridiction. Ces multiples interactions se sont principalement déroulées sous forme d'entretiens informels qui m'ont permis de m'impliquer profondément. En outre, l'analyse des généalogies de la ville du Guangdong et du village a facilité une compréhension traditionnelle et culturelle de la pensée délibérative et de la logique comportementale des villageois.

Chapitre un : La démocratie délibérative dans les études sur la Chine occidentale

Proposée comme réformatrice et parfois même comme un idéal politique plutôt radical, la démocratie délibérative commence par la critique des pratiques standards de la démocratie libérale (Bohman, 1998). Dans les premières formulations de l'idéal délibératif des années 1980, la délibération était conçue et toujours opposée à l'agrégation et au comportement stratégique encouragés par le vote et la négociation (Cohen, 1989 ; Sunstein, 1991 ; Knight et Johnson, 1994). Simplement définie, la délibération en soi signifie une communication mutuelle qui implique de peser et de refléter les préférences, les valeurs et les intérêts concernant des questions d'intérêt commun, et la démocratie délibérative place la délibération en son centre (Bächtiger, Dryzek, Mansbridge et Warren, 2018) comme une manière de se distinguer de la démocratie représentative individualiste et centrée sur le vote. Néanmoins, les détracteurs de la démocratie délibérative l'ont continuellement accusée d'être idéaliste et se sont méfiés de l'approche délibérative en raison du peu de chance de sa mise en œuvre. Ces deux critiques constituent les principaux défis sur sa qualité ambitieuse et ses études menées par des avant-gardistes.

L'enthousiasme pour les études sur la démocratie délibérative semble persister, les étudiants de ce domaine défendent la supériorité de la délibération sous des aspects globaux. Néanmoins, de nombreux mystères non résolus subsistent : par exemple, la relation paradoxale entre délibération et représentation (une méthode représentative favorise davantage l'élection que la délibération). L'étude de la question fondamentale de la représentativité dans la théorie politique contemporaine (Phillips, 1995 ; Manin, 1997 ; Young, 2000 ; Mansbridge, 2003) peut ainsi aider à aborder ce paradoxe. La représentation

et la délibération sont toutes deux liées à la démocratie, alors que certaines études antérieures supposaient un lien incompatible entre la représentation et la délibération. Par exemple, Madison, Hamilton et Jay (1987) ont donné toute la preuve de la représentativité respective dans un gouvernement élu et de la délibération publique dans la prise de décision. Cette idée a été réinterprétée dans le chef-d'œuvre *The Federalist Papers* : « la voix publique, prononcée par les représentants du peuple, sera plus conforme au bien public que si elle était prononcée par les gens eux-mêmes ». Ces conclusions sont héritées des réflexions de Rousseau sur la « relation entre la participation politique publique et le vote ». Cette analyse a été révisée dans les études les plus récentes, plutôt que de trop insister sur l'un ou l'autre, une idée plus générale de concilier participation publique et délibération dans la représentativité (Chamberlin et Courant, 1983) peut mieux décrire une démocratie plus dynamique.

Dans ce chapitre, une réévaluation de plusieurs dimensions clés de la démocratie délibérative est menée, au-delà d'un simple examen ontologique. Pour commencer, il revisite les liens solides et parfois le décalage entre la démocratie représentative et la démocratie délibérative. Dans ce contexte, les défis et critiques auxquels fait face la démocratie délibérative, tels que les problèmes de légitimité, sont traités par ceux qui la pratiquent avec des conceptions institutionnelles variées. En outre, un examen généalogique de la démocratie délibérative contribuera à une meilleure compréhension de la transformation (principalement conceptuelle) de l'idéal de la première génération vers le concept plus terre-à-terre et systémique de la démocratie délibérative de la troisième génération (certains auteurs soutiennent une quatrième génération). Simultanément, les deux concepts enchevêtrés de 'démocratie délibérative' et de 'délibération démocratique' sont également mis en évidence dans ces généalogies, car les nuances entre ces deux idées révèlent une tendance vers une légitimité issue du pluralisme dans la démocratie délibérative.

Les démocrates délibératifs comme Bohman (2012), Parkinson et Mansbridge (Eds.) (2012), Niemeyer (2014), Curato et Böker (2016) préconisent de reconstruire un système délibératif plus inclusif par opposition à la plupart des études empiriques sur la démocratie délibérative, qui, de manière restrictive, se sont concentrées sur quelques épisodes uniques de délibération. Plutôt que de développer davantage une perspective panoramique, cette étroitesse d'esprit peut échouer à développer des interactions dynamiques et inclusives entre les individus dans le système délibératif, dans lequel l'institutionnalisation de la

délibération joue un rôle crucial. Pour mieux comprendre la démocratie délibérative, il est également important de démêler les diversités entre les diverses formes démocratiques, en particulier la démocratie participative, laquelle fournit un cadre inspirant à la démocratie délibérative. Une démocratie dynamique et inclusive ne peut être justifiée que lorsque ces formes démocratiques sont davantage testées.

Les quatre dernières décennies ont été témoins de la prospérité de la démocratie délibérative, ce discours démocratique basé sur le discours, parfois radical, a apparemment gagné en prédominance dans les études démocratiques contemporaines. Depuis qu'elle a été proposée pour la première fois par le philosophe américain Joseph M. Bessette en 1980, l'idée de démocratie qu'elle incarne dans les mécanismes institutionnels américains a été vue comme une opposition à la démocratie directe (telle que proposée par la démocratie participative dans les années 1960) et à la prise de décision par les élites (gouvernement représentatif). À ce jour, dans son évolution ultérieure, de nombreux démocrates, philosophes, légalistes et sociologues ont enrichi son sens. Par exemple, Manin (1985), dans son essai fondamental en version française de *On Legitimacy and Political Deliberation*, affirme que « le fondement de la légitimité démocratique n'est pas la volonté générale, mais la délibération de tous » et a affirmé que la légitimité de la prise de décision vient du processus délibératif plutôt du consensus agrégatif. Dans ce contexte, ce chapitre a revisité certaines dimensions fondamentales des études sur la démocratie délibérative, pour approfondir et justifier la manière dont une approche délibérative contribue à une démocratie plus dynamique.

Une analyse généalogique de la démocratie délibérative est à la fois théoriquement et empiriquement utile pour saisir les derniers foyers de chaque génération. En gros, il existe trois générations. La reconstruction normative du concept par John Rawls, Jürgen Habermas, Bernard Manin, Joshua Cohen et John Dryzek dans la première génération; repenser l'inclusion démocratique et la pluralité dans la deuxième génération (par exemple, l'étude des institutions délibératives) par James Bohman, Amy Gutmann, Dennis Thompson, Monique Deveaux, Iris Young et Lynn Sanders et un tournant systémique de la démocratie délibérative forme la troisième génération par Jane Mansbridge, Walter Baber, Ian O'Flynn, John Parkinson, James Fishkin, Archon Fung, John Gastil et Leonardo Avritzer. Cette cartographie met en évidence plusieurs défis fondamentaux, très typiquement le problème de légitimité. Si nous acceptons la délibération comme une communication procédurale et raisonnée en démocratie, alors il subsiste une crise de

paradoxe et de légitimité entre et parmi les résultats légitimes provenant de la délibération authentique et de la délibération à grande échelle ; puisque le problème d'échelle rend très probablement la décision illégitime. Par conséquent, il reste urgent de rechercher la prise de décision légitimée dans la délibération à grande échelle. Alors qu'une conception de système délibératif (Mansbridge, 1999) semble remplir ce vide.

Le manifeste d'un « tournant systémique » de la démocratie délibérative (proposé par Jane Mansbridge, James Bohman, Simone Chambers, Thomas Christiano, Archon Fung, John Parkinson, Dennis Thompson et Mark Warren, l'idée principale de la troisième génération), considère les caractéristiques délibératives du système politique dans son ensemble. Simultanément, le rôle individuel et le site peuvent être examinés respectivement dans un tel système délibératif. Les contributions d'une conception systémique sont, premièrement, qu'elle prend des discours (non) fondés sur la raison comme l'émotion, la rhétorique, la narration et le témoignage dans une considération plus vaste. Cette nouvelle façon de penser a consolidé une signification plus pratique de la démocratie délibérative. Deuxièmement, un système délibératif donne un rôle à part entière au site individuel ainsi qu'à sa complémentarité institutionnelle. Néanmoins, un système délibératif doit être prudent face au « concept d'étirement » et à « l'affaiblissement des critères ».

Les derniers axes sont le réexamen du lien entre la démocratie de délibération et certains autres synonymes intriqués, par exemple, délibération démocratique et démocratie participative. La forme de délibération démocratique adopte une « tradition pluraliste » avec ses explications détaillées sur les dimensions fondamentales de la raison, du bien commun et de la légitimité de la démocratie délibérative. Cette nouvelle attention à l'expression de l'intérêt personnel et des procédures d'agrégation légitimantes enrichit une réflexion systémique de délibération sans perdre sa poursuite normative. Un autre point à retenir de la justification de la relation enchevêtrée entre la démocratie participative et la démocratie délibérative prend une analyse syncrétique, plutôt qu'agnostique, les deux en raison de son orientation différente, de sa tradition et de sa poursuite démocratique. Il est toujours plus sage de concilier les deux dans le modèle démocratique pour rechercher davantage une démocratie plus dynamique.

Si l'on critique encore la démocratie délibérative comme une utopie irréaliste en raison de sa viabilité pratique limitée, il faudrait simplement ignorer ou marginaliser les nombreuses et diverses innovations délibératives qui ont déjà été mises en œuvre avec succès dans le

monde réel. Si tel est le cas, nous pourrions mieux réfléchir à la manière de renforcer le caractère délibératif des diverses communications dans un cadre démocratique, plutôt que de se concentrer sur le décompte des votes. En ce sens, la démocratie doit être délibérative. Si nous adoptons généreusement des formes de communication plurielles (plus ou moins délibératives) à la fois dans la décision politique et dans la vie quotidienne plutôt que dans la discussion d'élite, alors ce concept délibératif de la démocratie est accessible à tous. Dans cette tradition délibérative de nombreuses orthodoxies en démocratie ont été réexaminées, le pouvoir, la coercition, l'intérêt personnel, le bien commun, etc. En outre, les relations entre et parmi la démocratie délibérative et bien d'autres comme la démocratie participative, la démocratie représentative et la délibération démocratique sont également adoptées comme une méthode d'analyse plus syncrétique. Jusqu'à présent, la démocratie délibérative reçoit autant de critiques qu'elle est louée, mais ce sont aussi ces chahuts qui aident une telle idée à évoluer vers une théorie éprouvée par le temps.

Chapitre deux : Perspectives occidentales sur la Chine : délibération autoritaire et consultation autoritaire

Les théories politiques occidentales ont eu une influence dominante de longue date, et les preuves politiques émergentes les moins orthodoxes ont été constamment marginalisées. Nonobstant, ma thèse se concentre sur l'étude politique indigénisée dans la Chine contemporaine, néanmoins, cette analyse est menée dans un cadre comparatif. Une telle comparaison peut non seulement fournir un nouvel aperçu non occidental de la politique chinoise, mais aussi aller au-delà d'une dichotomie « démocratie vs autoritarisme/non-démocratie ». Malheureusement, il existe encore des auteurs occidentaux qui rejettent les phénomènes naissants de (quasi) démocratie dans l'autoritarisme. La Chine peut se vanter d'une civilisation vieille de 5000 ans, la discipline politique chinoise n'a pourtant été instaurée que dans les années 1980. En ce sens, une combinaison d'études politiques chinoises avec une étude comparative offre une perspective très riche pour la Chine et l'Occident. Une telle approche comble également le vide pour une compréhension globale de la politique chinoise avec la propagande officielle des « caractéristiques chinoises (*zhongguo te'se* 中国特色) ».

Au cours des dernières décennies, lorsque les prophéties de « l'effondrement du régime autoritaire chinois » ont finalement été considérées comme autodestructrices, une étude sur la résilience autoritaire a été mise à l'ordre du jour. Nathan (2017) a développé cette

idée de « résilience autoritaire » concernant l'institutionnalisation du PCC comme antidote pour maintenir la survie du régime autoritaire chinois, dans lequel une participation et une délibération limitées sont considérées comme fonctionnant (au moins partiellement). Cette idée a ensuite été revisitée par Fewsmith et Nathan (2019) en étendant le bord et la portée de l'institutionnalisation et en révélant la lutte politique plus brutale au sein du parti. Ils indiquaient en quelque sorte la fragilité et la persistance de cet équilibre autoritaire. D'autres analyses similaires, telles que l'inclusivité du régime (Yan, 2011 ; Chien, 2016), la politique adaptative (Chai et Song, 2013), la réactivité de l'autoritarisme chinois (Lee et Zhang, 2013 ; Chen, Pan et Xu, 2016), la bonne gouvernance (Dethier, (Ed.), 2000 ; Zhang, 2006 ; Li, et Naughton, 2007 ; Deng, (Ed.), 2011) dans la Chine contemporaine, ont donc proliféré. Dans ce contexte, les prédictions sur l'avenir de la Chine ont également fait rage au cours des dernières décennies, par exemple, l'autoritarisme éclairant (Cabestan, 2004, 2015) et en déclin (Ding, 2006 ; Wang et You, 2016) dans un avenir prévisible. Toutes ces analyses contribuent à une compréhension globale de l'autoritarisme chinois et des réformes politiques.

Ce chapitre examine l'analyse de la démocratie délibérative chinoise dans le programme de recherche de la Chine occidentale. Il est très vrai que certains auteurs occidentaux ont commencé à abandonner une simple dichotomie autoritarisme et démocratie en se concentrant sur des développements apparemment paradoxaux mais démocratiques de l'autoritarisme chinois. Néanmoins, ces efforts sont loin d'être suffisants, compte tenu de l'hostilité idéologique et de la peur suscitées par la montée de la Chine. Certains critiques radicaux considèrent que les résultats universitaires chinois sont de la pseudoscience car ils suivent la propagande officielle et manquent de liberté académique. Cette relation antagoniste devrait être atténuée dans une étude politique comparative. A cet effet, j'ai donc l'ambition de relier les études politiques sino-occidentales en réexaminant d'abord les études occidentales de délibération autoritaire et de consultation autoritaire.

Pour commencer, je revisite l'autoritarisme de la Chine et sa résilience ainsi que les visions de l'avenir politique de la Chine. Il existe généralement deux factions principales mentionnées dans les études occidentales. Premièrement, les optimistes romantiques dirigés respectivement par le professeur He et Warren (2011), qui sont pleins d'attentes quant à l'avenir politique de la Chine sur la base des observations à long terme d'expérimentations démocratiques à la base. He Baogang pense que délibération et autoritarisme peuvent être réconciliés dans le contexte politique actuel de la Chine. Par la

suite, un groupe d'adeptes a défendu cette idée dans une perspective multidimensionnelle avec des résultats fructueux. Ce chapitre réexaminera également cette idée dans le contexte apparemment plus centralisé de l'époque de Xi. Deuxièmement, je me concentrerai sur la formulation d'une consultation autoritaire basée sur les dernières élaborations du professeur Truex (2017). Cette idée soutient que les soi-disant expériences délibératives en Chine sont simplement orientées vers la consultation et de nature beaucoup plus délibérative, en particulier dans les interactions politiques au niveau du régime.

Ce lien entre l'autoritarisme chinois et la consultation/délibération est fréquemment mis en évidence dans les études chinoises occidentales. Dans cette analyse, la consultation et la délibération sont adoptées pour consolider davantage l'autoritarisme chinois, ce n'est pas un moyen démocratique d'autonomisation publique. C'est probablement vrai. Néanmoins, le professeur Truex ne parvient pas à évaluer équitablement le débat interne de la Chine, en particulier en s'éloignant de la propagande officielle, très typiquement, un discours de « démocratie consultative ». Dans tous les cas, cette vision critique amène une compréhension plus globale des changements politiques de la Chine d'un point de vue extérieur.

Ces études vont plus loin sur la « perpétuation de l'autoritarisme » tout en examinant comment une méthode de consultation et de délibération fonctionne dans la résilience autoritaire de la Chine. Ces contributions sont en cours d'institutionnalisation dans le cadre politique chinois, tant au niveau central que local. Cet ancrage semble de plus en plus stable malgré le monopole du PCC. Grâce à ces indices, dans ce chapitre, je revisite tout d'abord les principales contributions des études chinoises occidentales, puis quelques réflexions sont faites sur la base d'une analyse plus approfondie de ces idées. Cela comprend une réévaluation critique de la relation et de l'interaction entre et parmi l'autoritarisme chinois, la consultation et la délibération, ainsi que d'autres hypothèses sur la manière dont cette consultation et cette délibération autoritaires peuvent évoluer à l'avenir.

De toute évidence, l'analyse de ce chapitre ne peut épuiser tous les cas en Occident. Certaines analyses non traditionnelles et fragmentées devraient également être incluses pour les références. Le but ultime de ce chapitre est d'interpréter davantage la politique autoritaire chinoise d'un point de vue occidental sur diverses questions difficiles telles que l'autoritarisme, la démocratie délibérative, la politique consultative et délibérative, et la réforme politique chinoise, etc. Il est gratifiant que les études chinoises occidentales aient

largement surmonté une simple dichotomie démocratique-autoritaire dans le programme de recherche politique et sociologique ou loué la politique chinoise d'un point de vue complètement intra-occidental basé sur l'ignorance de la culture, de l'histoire, des traditions et de la politique indigènes de la Chine. Ces auteurs sont des universitaires chinois travaillant dans des universités ou des instituts de recherche étrangers, des universitaires étrangers et des sinologues qui ont une riche expérience et une réflexion comparative dans les études chinoises. Les critiques chinois ont un profil similaire et leur esprit critique contribue à une compréhension plus globale de la démocratie délibérative chinoise.

Une approche consultative et délibérative dans la politique chinoise ou au-delà, dans les études chinoises occidentales, est adoptée de manière instrumentale par le PCC pour consolider davantage le régime autoritaire de la Chine. Ces observations sont fondées sur la vision déçue de l'avenir démocratique de la Chine ; en d'autres termes, le PCC ne montre aucun signe d'intérêt pour une démocratie électorale compétitive (ou une « transition démocratique » comme l'Occident l'envisage). Néanmoins, il y a des nouveautés dans ces études. Premièrement, l'accent mis sur la consultation et la délibération dans l'autoritarisme chinois adoucit la dichotomie démocratique dans les études politiques chinoises. Par exemple, comme l'indique une « délibération autoritaire », la délibération dans les localités chinoises a limité l'autonomisation du public et a très probablement facilité une démocratisation ascendante sans démocratie au niveau du régime. Deuxièmement, une diversité culturelle et politique dans la démocratie délibérative a élargi sa portée à l'autoritarisme. Cette forme possible (une coexistence de délibération et d'autoritarisme) peut être distincte à la fois de la construction théorique et de l'utilisation pratique dans les démocraties occidentales. Le plus souvent, de telles méthodes sont adoptées avec un côté fonctionnaliste (prise en compte de la légitimité, résolution de problèmes pratiques, et renforcement du régime autoritaire chinois, etc.). Troisièmement, bien qu'il y ait toujours des malentendus constants entre la Chine et l'Occident sur l'idéologie, la civilisation, le système politique et économique, une étude chinoise occidentale sur la démocratie délibérative chinoise introduit néanmoins la politique chinoise dans la vision du monde.

J'ai à peu près cerné deux principales formes de consultation et de délibération communicatives et interactives dans les études chinoises occidentales. Ces deux formes peuvent être distinguées plus avant dans un sens hiérarchique, géographique et relation de pouvoir. Par exemple, la plupart des analyses de Baogang He sur la délibération autoritaire

se concentrent sur la base chinoise, car il affirme que les expérimentations délibératives ne peuvent être menées qu'au niveau local en l'absence de démocratie de régime. Outre cette analyse hiérarchique, on constate que la consultation et la délibération peuvent être adoptées respectivement en fonction des relations de pouvoir, très vraisemblablement, dans certaines arènes politiques importantes comme la législation, les discussions intra/inter partis ; la consultation pour information y est assez régulière, tandis qu'une délibération authentique peut se trouver dans les villages locaux autonomes et les communautés urbaines. Il existe également des différences géographiques car les régions côtières sont plus développées sont plus capables et expérimentées dans la conduite de politiques consultatives et délibératives tandis que le Midwest plus conservateur est plus prudent sur une telle méthode.

Chapitre trois : Démocratie délibérative (*Xieshang Minzhu* 协商民主) indigénisée en Chine

L'intégration de la Chine dans le monde apporte des contacts fréquents avec l'Occident. Simultanément, des malentendus et une méfiance entre les deux parties se sont produits et ont conduit à des conflits et même des affrontements au cours des deux derniers siècles. Les études chinoises menées dans les institutions occidentales, en particulier au cours des 70 dernières années depuis la fondation de la Nouvelle Chine, étaient susceptibles d'évaluer et de prédire l'avenir de la Chine à partir du point de vue d'une société dotée d'un peuple rationnel (Hobbes, 1998) et d'un état démocratique à l'anglo-saxonne. Ces études ont tendance à croire que tout autre système politique qui ne se conforme pas à la démocratie de style occidental est voué à l'échec ou est plus tard contraint de vivre une transition démocratique. Ces idées ne sont pas dénuées de préjugés et certains auteurs pragmatiques appellent donc à la fin de ce principe de « transition démocratique » afin de mieux comprendre les changements politiques en Chine. Néanmoins, ce changement n'est pas facilité par la durabilité de tendance de ces études occidentales sur la Chine.

Heureusement, de plus en plus d'auteurs chinois avec un passif ou une expérience occidentale rendent possible une étude politique comparative entre la Chine et l'Occident. Ils constituent l'épine dorsale de la « nouvelle gauche » (Xu 2003 ; Li, 2010) parmi les intellectuels chinois. Ils reconnaissent partiellement certaines doctrines démocratiques occidentales, comme la liberté d'expression, l'indépendance judiciaire, la culture de la société civile, par exemple, et insistent simultanément sur les caractéristiques de la Chine.

Cette école est différente du « libéralisme » complètement occidentalisé et du « socialisme aux caractéristiques chinoises » annoncés par les fonctionnaires et la propagande chinois. Le deuxième chapitre fournit une compréhension occidentale de la démocratie délibérative chinoise, et ces discussions tournent autour de l'autoritarisme chinois. Dans ce chapitre, une perspective indigénisée est adoptée pour approfondir les divergences et le consensus au sein de la Chine via une analyse bidimensionnelle, à savoir le discours politique officiel et la recherche universitaire.

Une approche indigénisée soutient que la démocratie chinoise, les formes démocratiques de base et la démocratie délibérative existent en parallèle et doivent être distinguées de la démocratie occidentale. Le discours occidental n'est pas le seul à prévaloir. Cette indigénisation doit être comprise au sens large dans ses deux dimensions : premièrement, une indigénisation académique des pensées, doctrines, concepts politiques importés, etc., qui doivent être conciliés et intégrés dans le contexte politique de la Chine ; deuxièmement, une mise en évidence politique de la politique indigénisée qui, comme souvent mentionnée dans la propagande chinoise, provient et est créée par le PCC. À ce jour, un tel processus indigénisé dans la Chine contemporaine est passé approximativement par deux étapes, importées de l'Union soviétique après la fondation de la nouvelle Chine en 1949. Cette étape de la science politique chinoise imite principalement la politique de style soviétique. Après la réforme et l'ouverture en 1978, le lancement de l'économie de marché a facilité la modernisation de la politique chinoise et les intellectuels chinois à ce stade ont adopté une science politique anglo-saxonne mettant l'accent sur la liberté et l'égalité. Néanmoins, une politique chinoise au sens indigène est loin d'être établie par la suite.

Cette approche indigénisée facilite la compréhension de la naissance d'un sens chinois de la délibération (*xieshang*) ou de la démocratie délibérative (*xieshang minzhu*). Ce processus montre clairement comment ce concept a évolué avec la tradition politique du PCC, ainsi que les pensées et la culture politiques traditionnelles chinoises. Après cette cartographie historique, la démocratie délibérative (*xieshang minzhu*) en Chine a avalisé certaines significations indigénisées dans le langage et la formulation du PCC. La démocratie délibérative chinoise est tout d'abord présentée comme différente de la version occidentale, et indique, comme dans le cadre officiel de la « démocratie consultative », qu'une adhésion au *xieshang minzhu* ne signifie pas que le PCC approuve le concept de démocratie délibérative. Puis, après le dix-huitième NPC, une ambiguïté conceptuelle se résout progressivement tant dans le discours officiel que dans la discussion académique. Un tel

concept dépeint une autre image de démocratie délibérative en Chine, avec la direction du PCC, d'une interaction politique plus consultative et apparemment institutionnalisée.

Ce concept progressivement sans ambiguïté a été davantage réconcilié et intégré dans le discours démocratique et la gouvernance de la Chine au cours des deux dernières décennies avec de riches significations. Tel que définie dans la démocratie chinoise, c'est une combinaison de délibération (*xieshang*) et d'élection. Cette délibération, dans la toute dernière explication officielle, est vaste, à plusieurs niveaux et institutionnalisée, et elle comprend une consultation intra/inter-partis et une délibération publique sauvage. Une autre vision de la gouvernance délibérative, ou une manière délibérative plus explicite de conduire la politique, est à nouveau soulignée par le PCC dans son approbation de la « bonne gouvernance ». Grâce à des consultations et à des délibérations avec le public, les gouvernements, à tous les niveaux, sont plus à même de servir le bien public en analysant les préférences du public. En d'autres termes, le monopole autoritaire et l'utilisation pragmatique sont toujours les principaux points à retenir pour examiner la gouvernance délibérative chinoise.

En Chine, la voix croissante sur la reconstruction du discours politique indigénisé chinois n'est pas surprenante, étant donné la montée soudaine de la puissance économique de la Chine, qui a inspiré la propagande officielle ou les discussions intellectuelles : par exemple, les « quatre confidences » proposées par Xi Jinping à la conférence célébrant le 95^e anniversaire de la fondation du PCC, à savoir la confiance dans le chemin, les théories, le système et la culture chinois. Comprendre l'indigénisation de la politique chinoise ne peut se limiter à un débat sur l'occidentalisation et l'indigénisation ; le PCC a également l'ambition de commercialiser son modèle politique (inventé avec des caractéristiques chinoises) dans le monde entier avec son influence économique croissante. Malgré de nombreuses critiques, cette perspective indigénisée constitue un aperçu important et interne de la politique chinoise et ne doit pas être simplement sous-estimée dans la politique mondiale.

Quant à la question spéciale de la démocratie délibérative chinoise, les fonctionnaires chinois ont adopté un concept et une explication plus intuitifs et sans ambiguïté de la « démocratie consultative » qui montre clairement ce que le PCC veut dire et veut. Dans le milieu universitaire chinois, les intellectuels, qu'ils soient de nouveaux gauchistes, libéraux ou socialistes aux caractéristiques chinoises, sont tous constamment en train de (ré)

interpréter leurs revendications politiques en se basant sur la compréhension de l'Occident et de la Chine. Ils travaillent sur le positionnement actuel de la Chine, ses interactions avec le reste du monde et ses attentes et visions pour l'avenir. Leurs efforts mettent en lumière des discours chinois plus indigénisés. La démocratie à la chinoise est peut-être le discours le plus provocateur et le plus stimulant en offrant une forme démocratique différente non basée sur des élections compétitives. Bien que ce discours n'ait pas été largement accepté et reconnu par l'Occident à ce stade, il est très apprécié par le milieu universitaire national traditionnel et facilite la mise en évidence de la propagande de la *caractéristique chinoise*.

Cette analyse bidimensionnelle basée sur la propagande officielle et les discussions académiques visait à une compréhension globale de la démocratie délibérative dans une perspective indigénisée. En regardant l'histoire révolutionnaire du PCC, on peut dire à juste titre que la délibération (*xieshang*, ou toute autre formulation de langage connexe comme la politique, la démocratie et la gouvernance du *xieshang shi* de type délibératif, comme le montre une analyse sémantique de ce chapitre) a une source indigénisée en Chine. Le PCC proscrit et prescrit l'utilisation de ce terme, d'une part, pour le distinguer de l'Occident (combler le vide des divergences entre la Chine et l'Occident) tout en ajoutant de nouvelles significations à ce concept pour l'accommoder avec la règle autoritaire du PCC. En ce sens, la démocratie consultative correspondait à la meilleure façon d'expliquer les intentions du PCC. Plus vraisemblablement, cette démocratie consultative est davantage institutionnalisée et pratiquée dans certains contextes spéciaux comme le C/LPPCC et le United Front Work, par exemple. Les discussions intellectuelles sont plus diversifiées, les études dominantes sont positives et optimistes à propos du discours officiel avec des réinterprétations et des défenses cohérentes. On ne sait toujours pas quelles sont leurs véritables pensées sans une liberté académique appropriée. Même si les discussions intellectuelles apportent des critiques, elles restent prudentes, sans véritable enjeu et une réflexion plus approfondie sur l'autoritarisme de la Chine et le discours démocratique devrait être mise à l'ordre du jour. En bref, une question plus ouverte mais non résolue peut être qu'une approche indigénisée doit s'armer d'une étude comparative plus large sur les concepts délibératifs et démocratiques. Elle peut également devoir adopter certaines méthodologies scientifiques, par exemple des analyses quantitatives.

Après tout, une réévaluation conceptuelle de la démocratie délibérative chinoise dans un sens comparatif a amélioré une compréhension empirique de la gouvernance consultative /délibérative. Les gouvernements modernes dans les démocraties et l'autoritarisme sont

engagés dans des innovations et des réformes en matière de gouvernance afin de redéfinir davantage la relation entre le public et les représentants grâce à une communication fondée sur le dialogue. Une telle approche consultative et délibérative profite aux deux parties car elle peut renforcer la légitimité et la prise de décision démocratique et simultanément le public est également valorisé dans ce processus. Néanmoins, il existe également des différences entre les démocraties et les autoritarismes. Les dirigeants autoritaires sont favorables à une meilleure gouvernance basée sur des consultations et des délibérations contrôlables ; lorsque le public est endoctriné et souscrit à de telles politiques, l'autoritarisme se consolide davantage. Cette logique peut être confirmée davantage dans la relation très enchevêtrée entre le PCC, le gouvernement et la société civile. La gouvernance consultative et délibérative locale dirigée par le gouvernement hiérarchique (de haut en bas) a mis en évidence le rôle central et parfois positif de l'État pour faciliter les apports limités et ses transformations à la bonne gouvernance. Les réponses peuvent être trouvées dans les riches preuves empiriques de la Chine contemporaine (le cinquième chapitre).

Chapitre quatre : L'institutionnalisation de la consultation et de la délibération en tant qu'outil de régime autoritaire

Que ce soit dans le contexte de la démocratie ou de l'autoritarisme, l'institutionnalisation est toujours un mot-clé très fréquent qui se rattache à la modernisation et à la démocratisation. Dans son explication historique sur la « théorie institutionnelle », Scott (1995/2001) identifie la définition de l'institutionnalisation comme une synthèse des arguments de grands théoriciens antérieurs (Veblen, Durkheim, Weber) : « un système d'action serait institutionnalisé pour la mesure dans laquelle les acteurs d'une relation continue ont orienté leur action vers un ensemble commun de normes normatives et de modèles de valeurs ». Les processus d'institutionnalisation expliquent certaines questions clés telles que la naturalisation des modèles de domination et d'oppression dans les institutions mêmes et ailleurs. L'institutionnalisation politique de la Chine s'est développée rapidement au cours des deux dernières décennies. En ce qui concerne la démocratie délibérative institutionnalisée, elle a bénéficié de nombreux héritages politiques de la consultation politique chinoise et de la ligne de masse. Le régime et les niveaux locaux ont mis en place diverses formes d'institutions et de cadres consultatifs et délibératifs pour ouvrir la voie à la démocratie délibérative chinoise et à la gouvernance à la base jusqu'à

présent. Ainsi, ce chapitre suit un indice institutionnel pour analyser comment la Chine adopte son côté fonctionnaliste de démocratie délibérative pour servir le but autoritaire.

Bien qu'il soit confronté à de nombreuses questions et à un scepticisme sur la démocratie délibérative chinoise, ce discours politique a sans aucun doute fait la preuve qu'il était théoriquement approprié et empiriquement réalisable dans le contexte autoritaire chinois. L'institutionnalisation de la démocratie délibérative chinoise a plusieurs implications : premièrement, elle s'inscrit dans la tendance générale de l'institutionnalisation dans les politiques modernes, c'est-à-dire vers une gouvernance standardisée et moderne ; deuxièmement, cela indique les efforts du PCC pour institutionnaliser et légitimer son régime autoritaire par le biais de diverses institutions bien conçues (ce n'est pas, selon moi, l'autonomisation démocratique du public). Dans ce contexte, ce chapitre réexamine d'abord les trajectoires évolutives de diverses institutions consultatives et délibératives après la mise en place du PCC. De 1921 à nos jours, deux périodes historiques sont mises en évidence : la coopération partisane et la consultation au sein de la CCPPC (1921-1978) et la consultation politique à la gouvernance délibérative (1978-présent). Ensuite, je démêle les liens solides entre l'institutionnalisation de la consultation et de la délibération et la consolidation autoritaire.

Quelles sont les caractéristiques et comment fonctionne cette institutionnalisation autoritaire de la démocratie délibérative chinoise ? Premièrement, ce processus est lié à d'autres discours et contextes politiques indigénisés, la démocratie chinoise, par exemple ; deuxièmement, diverses institutions consultatives et délibératives sont conçues pour la collecte et la surveillance d'informations, le C/LPPCC, par exemple, étant le principal lieu de consultations politiques entre le PCC et d'autres partis démocratiques, impliquant rarement une délibération authentique. Mais ce cadre institutionnel rend néanmoins la règle du parti unique plus tranquille et acceptable ; troisièmement, il existe de grandes variations en termes de qualité délibérative (caractère délibératif) dans les différentes institutions consultatives et délibératives. La CCPPC est définie comme un organe consultatif spécialisé dans les contextes politiques chinois, la qualité délibérative est déclinée hiérarchiquement du niveau local au niveau central. Habituellement, la direction du PCC l'emporte sur les autres partis démocratiques (à l'intérieur/à l'extérieur de la L/CCPPC), et ces interactions sont toujours critiquées comme une simple « collecte d'informations ». Quant à certains cas florissants de budgets participatifs au cours des trois dernières décennies, ils ne sont pour la plupart ni consultatifs ni délibératifs, mais

uniquement destinés à la participation du public. Néanmoins, de nombreux observateurs s'accordent à dire que la délibération authentique peut être trouvée dans les zones autonomes chinoises, les villages, par exemple.

Il est juste de conclure que l'institutionnalisation de la démocratie délibérative dans le contexte chinois favorise et facilite simultanément la modernisation et l'autoritarisme de la Chine. Dans ce sens, différentes institutions ont des fonctions participatives, consultatives et délibératives de manière assez hybride et elles sont méthodologiquement adoptées pour consolider un régime autoritaire résilient. Ces efforts institutionnalisés, du moins à ce stade, sont prouvés et maintenus de manière stable. Pour être clair, je réexamine respectivement la participation, la consultation et la délibération dans diverses institutions et leur institutionnalisation. Ce cadre analytique renvoie à une étude comparative au sens hiérarchique, relation de pouvoir et géographique sur de nombreuses pratiques (également présentée dans le cinquième chapitre). Plutôt que de se perdre dans une ambiguïté conceptuelle, cette différenciation facilite une focalisation plus concrète sur ces institutions et l'institutionnalisation.

Au cours des deux dernières décennies, les théoriciens pragmatiques se sont de plus en plus intéressés à la faisabilité et aux aspects pratiques de la délibération et de la démocratie délibérative. Cette focalisation a suscité plus tard un appel à une étude de la démocratie délibérative « terre à terre » avec de nombreuses conceptions délibératives dispersées dans différentes hiérarchies, royaumes, contextes politiques et origines culturelles. Par exemple, en plus des lieux de délibération classiques comme les parlements, certains autres espaces publics comme le scrutin délibératif et l'assemblée des citoyens ont également fleuri. Ces conceptions hautement institutionnalisées garantissent que le public peut accéder et participer aux délibérations. Si nous adoptons, comme mentionné ci-dessus, une définition plus large de l'institutionnalisation, peut-être que certaines conceptions et contextes informels liés par la coutume, les conventions et la culture, devraient également être pris en considération dans cette analyse. L'« institutionnalisation de la démocratie délibérative » au sens large, comme le supposent de nombreux démocrates délibératifs, ne fournit pas seulement une boîte à outils pour pratiquer la délibération dans la vie réelle; il est également identifié comme le principal promoteur d'un virage systémique de la démocratie délibérative.

Une cartographie de l'institutionnalisation de la démocratie délibérative chinoise (1921-présent) indique comment ces pratiques non structurées et désorganisées (quasi) délibératives se sont progressivement institutionnalisées dans un sens moderne. Ce peignage historique et culturel est également théoriquement utile pour fournir des sources indigénisées et expliquer le caractère unique de la démocratie délibérative chinoise. Ces évolutions traçables existent principalement dans l'exploration du PCC, de la coopération partisane précoce à l'institutionnalisation de la consultation du C/LPPCC après la fondation de la nouvelle Chine en 1949. Une renaissance et un rajeunissement de la politique consultative après la réforme et l'ouverture en 1978 basée sur le C/LPPCC institutionnalisé constitue la pierre angulaire de la conception politique chinoise. Une telle considération tire quelques leçons des tragédies politiques des années 60 et 70 où la consultation et la délibération stagnaient en raison des mouvements politiques. Jusqu'à présent, le repositionnement du C/LPPCC ainsi que de certaines autres institutions politiques consultatives et délibérantes comme le travail du Front uni fonctionnait conjointement dans le cadre politique actuel de la Chine. Simultanément, les pratiques locales plus dynamiques contribuent à une autre compréhension de la démocratie délibérative chinoise. Ces pratiques et conceptions informelles sont mélangées à diverses formes de communication et interactives telles que la participation, la consultation et la délibération, et elles facilitent potentiellement l'autonomisation du public et la culture de la société civile.

Néanmoins, comme je le conclus, cette institutionnalisation de la démocratie délibérative chinoise n'approuve pas une étreinte de la démocratie délibérative (à la fois un concept délibératif de démocratie et l'autonomisation publique comme le vote et le suffrage). C'est une institutionnalisation de l'autoritarisme par l'approche consultative et délibérative. Par exemple, le C/LPPCC et certaines autres institutions consultatives bien conçues au niveau du régime sont constamment critiqués comme des « vitrines » ou des « étiquetages ». Nous sommes bien conscients que ces institutions remplissent leur rôle dans la conception du PCC en tant que simples organes consultatifs. Sa signification de façade est cependant plus grande que sa fonction substantielle. Les optimistes placent plus probablement leurs espoirs dans les pratiques et expérimentations locales (de base). Ils y trouvent eux-mêmes une délibération authentique justifiée au niveau local, en particulier dans le village autonome, et il peut y avoir une implication et une influence démocratiques subséquentes. Cela peut être vrai, néanmoins, son avenir est sombre. Cela n'est pas seulement dû au fait

que ces institutions délibératives massives sont inextricablement liées au gouvernement, elles sont pour la plupart (semi) officielles. Surtout à l'époque de Xi, une nouvelle insistance sur la construction du parti à la base indique un contrôle plus autoritaire sur l'autonomie locale.

Chapitre cinq : La gouvernance consultative/délibérative (*Xieshang Zhili* 协商治理) en pratique : deux études de cas

Un nouvel examen normatif et théorique de la démocratie délibérative en Occident ouvre la voie à un réexamen de certaines de ses dimensions fondamentales et, par la suite, offre des possibilités de construction du nouveau concept non occidental et indigène de la « démocratie délibérative » dans l'autoritarisme chinois. Cette transition de l'examen normatif à l'analyse empirique sur la gouvernance consultative/délibérative a inspiré un groupe de praticiens et de partisans enthousiastes travaillant sur une pratique délibérative apparemment plus dynamique. En Chine, l'État fort est généralement le pionnier pour faciliter cette gouvernance consultative/délibérative avec une manipulation (in) directe du processus consultatif/délibératif, du lieu, du sujet et des résultats. Ce n'est cependant pas le tableau complet. Par exemple, les cadres de base dans certains villages et communautés urbaines de la côte est sont prêts à adopter une approche consultative/délibérative pour résoudre des problèmes pratiques.

Il existe diverses incitations à cette motivation. Insatisfaits de la baisse des performances induites par l'économie, les responsables à tous les niveaux considèrent l'innovation politique comme une autre alternative pour améliorer leurs performances. Il s'agit d'un processus réciproque, car le gouvernement peut partager des responsabilités et des prises de décision désavantageuses en consultant et en délibérant avec le public pendant que le public est valorisé et peut avoir quelque chose à dire en participant à des consultations et à des délibérations. Un autre point à retenir est la mise en avant de la bonne gouvernance. Par sa définition, la bonne gouvernance est liée à la manière dont le gouvernement fournit les biens publics et à la manière dont la souveraineté populaire est mise en pratique dans la prise de décision. La poursuite de la bonne gouvernance par la Chine est basée sur la méritocratie, l'extrême efficacité, la réactivité, la supervision et le concours de sélection des cadres ; elle est considérée comme la source la plus vitale de légitimité pour le PCC.

Par conséquent, dans ce chapitre, deux cas de consultation législative dans le processus de réglementation locale (au niveau municipal) et de délibération à la base dans les villages ruraux chinois sont analysés pour démontrer la gouvernance consultative/délibérative en cours en Chine. Ces deux cas sont classés par hiérarchies, domaines, lieux et relations de pouvoir différents. Pour démêler les interactions complexes et le moment de consultation /délibération, trois dimensions discursives sont mises en évidence. En premier lieu, quelle est la relation entrelacée entre et parmi les différents participants et parties prenantes ? Deuxièmement, comment ces incertitudes sociales et parfois ces résistances sont-elles gérées par une approche consultative/délibérative ? En d'autres termes, comment ce côté fonctionnaliste de la démocratie délibérative chinoise est-il réconcilié dans la gouvernance chinoise. Enfin, cette gouvernance consultative/délibérative peut-elle faciliter un autoritarisme plus résilient en Chine au-delà d'une simple consolidation d'un régime autoritaire.

Ces deux cas ne peuvent certainement pas brosser le tableau complet de la gouvernance consultative/délibérative en Chine. Néanmoins, ils donnent un aperçu de diverses questions importantes dans la politique autoritaire de la Chine contemporaine : par exemple, les interactions entre le parti-État et la société, et la poursuite de la bonne gouvernance. Cet accent mis sur la gouvernance est opportun, en particulier lorsque les démocraties occidentales sont confrontées à un déclin de la gouvernance dans l'ère postpandémique. Ces conditions exceptionnelles ont incité à reposer des questions : avons-nous besoin d'un gouvernement fort et le gouvernement devrait-il établir sa propre autorité par un contrôle renforcé, etc. ? En ce sens, il est intéressant d'explorer les expériences chinoises.

En plus de relier cette gouvernance consultative/délibérative à l'autoritarisme de la Chine, une autre considération est de savoir comment cette forme de gouvernance hybride établit des configurations modernes, tout en héritant d'une certaine pensée traditionnelle et culturelle et d'une logique comportementale. Par exemple, la participation du public à l'audition législative conserve encore des éléments de mobilisation de masse maoïste. La pleine participation a très peu à voir avec la prise de décision, cependant. La délibération à la base est assez souvent décrite comme une « délibération confucéenne » qui valorise la gouvernance morale, la modération des élites et le réseau de parenté comme des éléments indispensables de la gouvernance. En un mot, mes observations à travers des cas concrets indiquent que la gouvernance consultative/délibérative chinoise englobe à la fois les

conceptions modernes et l'héritage culturel, ce qui contribue en fin de compte à un « autoritarisme délibératif » plutôt qu'à d'autres hypothèses.

L'influence croissante de la théorie de la démocratie délibérative occidentale dans les universités chinoises a eu tendance à marginaliser la délibération populaire indigénisée répandue en Chine, qui est constamment interprétée à travers le discours de la démocratie délibérative chinoise. Pour beaucoup, ce type de pratique délibérative peu orthodoxe est anormal et peut avoir peu d'impact sur l'évolution délibérative. Les auteurs qui soutiennent ce discours peuvent trop se focaliser sur cette idée et passer à côté du principe de construction d'un système délibératif plus terre-à-terre, certes, mais plus inclusif. Mes efforts ne sont ni d'exclure l'influence des études occidentales sur la démocratie délibérative en Chine, comme le font de nombreuses études indigènes, ni d'appliquer sans discernement les théories occidentales à la pratique chinoise. La contribution de ce chapitre est de réconcilier certaines doctrines et pratiques occidentales avec la démocratie délibérative chinoise. Ce cadre analytique est prouvé théoriquement et pratiquement réalisable et acceptable dans la réalité délibérative de la Chine ; il peut également fournir un autre modèle pour l'étude de la démocratie délibérative et de sa pratique dans un contexte multiculturel.

Comme mon premier cas l'a indiqué, dans les domaines hiérarchiques supérieurs et dans certains domaines clés (la législation, par exemple), une approche consultative est plus attrayante en l'absence d'élections compétitives, la fourniture de biens publics par des moyens participatifs et consultatifs est plus facile à atteindre. Dans la législation autoritaire chinoise, comme j'ai inventé ce type de « monopole du PCC, pseudo-dominant N/LPC, C/LPPCC étant une plate-forme consultative formaliste et une participation publique (passive) », la consultation législative de base prend parfois en compte les doléances publiques et fait des concessions ou compromis. Dans le processus d'élaboration de la réglementation locale, ces limites sont redistribuées dans des cadres plus sophistiqués-les querelles entre le LPC et le gouvernement (départements), ainsi que la participation extérieure à la consultation législative, le LPPCC, le public ordinaire, les experts, etc. Néanmoins, ce modèle législatif chaotique, à son tour, a abouti jusqu'à présent à une législation efficace et stable dans un contexte chinois autoritaire.

S'il est dit que le développement économique était la principale question politique avant le 18e Congrès national du PCC, alors le renforcement et l'innovation de la gouvernance à la

base ont été la pierre angulaire de la politique chinoise (Hao, 2020) dans la nouvelle ère. La grande attention de la Chine à la gouvernance à la base n'est pas seulement accordée au maintien de la stabilité, mais elle constitue également une partie vitale de la gouvernance aux caractéristiques chinoises. Dans ce contexte, le caractère persuasif des délibérations villageoises est plus fort dans la démocratie délibérative indigène de la Chine. Il hérite de la délibération basée sur l'harmonie et la compétition entre factions dans les collectivités villageoises, héritage du confucianisme. Les interactions des villageois sont également basées sur la parenté, dans laquelle des compromis et des concessions sont faits avec la médiation des cadres du village et des membres de l'élite. Plus récemment, certaines institutions délibératives démocratiques et modernes ont été créées pour cultiver une délibération plus standardisée. Simultanément, la délibération historico-culturelle est également incorporée dans cette boîte à outils pour fonctionner pour résoudre les conflits pratiques et rééquilibrer les relations entre les villageois.

Dans une vision plus large, la gouvernance dans les démocraties et les systèmes autoritaires a été évaluée comme étant plus inclusive et plus réactive. Pour ce faire, de nombreux théoriciens tentent d'ajouter quelque chose de nouveau, par exemple la gouvernance participative, collaborative et délibérative. En fait, la Chine montre un degré d'ouverture et de réactivité relativement élevé pour ces formes gouvernementales. Auparavant, ces idées étaient mises en pratique par le biais d'institutions et de formes diverses (in) formelles, (non) structurées et locales. Dans ce processus, les communications (hiérarchiques) imprègnent les interactions entre l'État chinois, le gouvernement et la société civile. Il a prouvé tout d'abord que ce modèle délibératif dirigé par le gouvernement facilitait la bonne gouvernance et par la suite que la délibération locale, plus autonome, a permis une certaine autonomisation et une certaine stabilité sociale.

En fin de compte, je dois répondre au dilemme classique, à savoir si l'utilisation plus flexible de la délibération à la fois normativement et empiriquement (par exemple le cas de la Chine) est un paradoxe pour maintenir les principes fondamentaux de la démocratie délibérative d'une part, en risquant d'en étirer le sens. Cette préoccupation a déjà été justifiée par de nombreux auteurs. Par exemple, Bächtiger et al (2010) ont souligné que « la délibération souffre du risque de devenir si large qu'elle admet des distorsions de communication problématiques ». Mais mes études de cas n'ont pas l'intention de tomber dans cette polémique. Tout d'abord, j'ai effacé les limites théoriques en adoptant respectivement les termes participatif, consultatif et délibératif pour éviter la pente

glissante de permettre à presque toutes les formes de communication d'être catégorisées comme délibératives. Deuxièmement, même dans certains cas comme les pratiques délibératives, la délibération villageoise de base, par exemple, j'ai distingué différents moments. Cela dit, il peut y avoir délibération de procédure pendant que la prise de décision est compromise. Cela permet de rester dans le cadre normatif de la délibération en permettant aux acteurs politique de se hisser à un niveau plus élevé de comportement politique.

Conclusion

L'obsession de la démocratie délibérative a conduit à diverses interprétations conceptuelles de la délibération et de la démocratie délibérative. Comme l'a déploré Mutz (2008), « il peut être juste de dire qu'il y a autant de définitions de la délibération qu'il y a de théoriciens ». Bien que la d'études dans ce domaine soit vaste, elle n'a pas encore atteint sa limite. Pour ce modèle normatif, de nombreuses critiques radicales tournaient autour de sa déconnexion de la réalité. Néanmoins, il est important de se rendre compte sobrement que la démocratie délibérative, comme l'ont affirmé Ercan et Dryzek (2015), est une théorie normative plutôt qu'une naïveté totale (ou comme Mansbridge et al 2010 l'ont déclaré plutôt une théorie explicative sur la politique existante). La démocratie délibérative offre un ensemble diversifié de normes sur la base desquelles ces démocraties et pratiques démocratiques réellement existantes peuvent être analysées, critiquées et améliorées (Ercan et Dryzek, 2015). Par conséquent, les démocrates délibératifs peuvent être plus motivés et inspirés pour explorer comment la démocratie délibérative peut être plus transférée dans la vie politique réelle de la manière la moins déformée.

Cette compréhension normative est reconstruite en repensant les dimensions fondamentales de la démocratie délibérative ; c'est-à-dire la raison (interaction communicative) et la poursuite du bien commun. Ces deux principes sont également exactement au cœur de la différenciation de la démocratie délibérative des autres formes démocratiques. Portant trop de critiques sur le risque de définir vaguement ce qui constitue et rend compte de la délibération, les démocrates délibératifs ont l'ambition d'élargir et de diffuser une compréhension équitable de ce concept avec la réorganisation et la reconnaissance de certaines autres formes de communication comme l'expression émotionnelle, la rhétorique, la narration. Ces interactions véhiculent un échange de raisonnement qui peut contribuer et faciliter une communication humaine plus terre-à-

terre et réciproque. Néanmoins, comme le craignait Steiner (2008), « ... Si le concept est trop poussé, il commence à vouloir tout dire et donc rien ». Si telle est la vérité, notre compréhension du bien commun devrait également être modifiée en abandonnant le consensus dans les délibérations contestataires. Ce processus délibératif vise à clarifier (au moins) certaines préférences du public et, si possible, à atteindre un sens commun.

Il semble que toutes ces discussions se limitent aux études anglo-américaines, avec quelques autres universitaires occidentaux traditionnels. Les études proviennent rarement de différents régimes politiques, la Chine autoritaire, par exemple. Très peu pensent que la délibération et la démocratie peuvent exister sous l'autoritarisme chinois, et s'il y en a, elles sont censées être symboliques. Cet état d'esprit dichotomique de longue date (parfois biaisé) entre l'autoritarisme et la démocratie est omniprésent et prédomine d'une manière ou d'une autre dans les études sur la Chine occidentale. Ces occidentaux veulent toujours voir une Chine qu'ils ont remodelée plutôt que son type d'origine. Jusqu'au début de ce siècle, seules quelques discussions connexes étaient inscrites à l'ordre du jour. Le pionnier, He Baogang, a proposé la conception paradoxale de la délibération autoritaire en Chine (plus tard, ce concept s'étendra à d'autres régimes autoritaires) pour expliquer comment l'autoritarisme chinois coexiste avec la délibération et à quoi il ressemble. Théoriquement, l'autoritarisme est compatible avec la délibération, et cette dernière est principalement adoptée méthodologiquement pour servir la première plutôt que pour l'autonomisation des citoyens. En pratique, ces affaires délibératives florissantes en Chine (en particulier au niveau local) font également allusion à cette possibilité et à ce potentiel.

Pour justifier l'existence rationnelle de la démocratie délibérative chinoise (*xieshang minzhu* 协商民主), j'ai mené une étude en deux dimensions, une analyse comparative entre la Chine et l'Occident sur cette question particulière de la démocratie délibérative chinoise au sens horizontal, et une analyse basée sur facteurs hiérarchiques, géographiques et professionnels sur ce concept ambigu dans le contexte chinois. Ces efforts ont texturé et repris une partie de l'essence de la démocratie délibérative chinoise dans un examen global. Toutes ces hypothèses audacieuses commencent par un réexamen de l'autoritarisme chinois et de sa résilience. Mes analyses vont au-delà de la tradition indéracinable des études chinoises occidentales de l'attente de la transition démocratique de la Chine (comme le soulignent à plusieurs reprises l'analyse de Huntington (1991), ainsi que les discussions de ses partisans sur la troisième vague de démocratisation). Nous devons au contraire examiner le modèle

politique et l'évolution de la Chine de manière pragmatique sans nous limiter à ce cadre analytique.

Ce changement oblige les chercheurs chinois et occidentaux à garder l'esprit ouvert, à ne pas surestimer les menaces posées par la montée en puissance de la Chine et à éviter en même temps la sur-description du caractère unique de la Chine. Ce rééquilibrage donne aux chercheurs chinois plus de latitude pour observer pourquoi l'autoritarisme chinois est maintenu et toujours vigoureux. Évidemment, de nombreux contributeurs fonctionnent dans ce continuum : en l'absence d'élection compétitive, comment le PCC peut-il apporter le bien public ? Comment le niveau supérieur peut-il écouter et communiquer avec le niveau inférieur, quelle que soit la raison de surveillance ou d'égalité de communication ? Comment le régime et le gouvernement autoritaires de la Chine peuvent-ils obtenir la légitimité et le soutien de son peuple ? Toutes ces questions renvoient à la consultation et à la délibération avec le peuple. La consultation et la délibération autoritaires sous la perspective occidentale est plus d'un sens méthodologique pour analyser comment de telles formes de communication peuvent faciliter et consolider l'autoritarisme du PCC. Cependant, dans le plan de propagande de la Chine et dans un certain consensus académique national, la délibération constitue non seulement la forme de base de la démocratie aux caractéristiques chinoises, mais elle fait également référence à un meilleur moyen de gouvernance.

Après cette analyse comparative, quelle peut être la meilleure description de la démocratie délibérative de la Chine ? Évidemment, il est impossible de donner une définition avec une réinterprétation monogénétique et complètement indigénisée (occidentale ou chinoise). Normalement, cette conception incorpore certaines doctrines de la démocratie délibérative anglo-américaine dominante, qui prône un dialogue et une délibération égaux entre et parmi beaucoup d'autres, mais insiste sur la direction du PCC. La communication hiérarchique garantit que le PCC peut garder un œil sur l'ensemble de la société, tandis que dialectiquement parlant, la bonne gouvernance découle également de cette collecte et analyse d'informations. De la consultation politique initiale, la ligne de masse de Mao, le travail du Front uni et d'autres formes originales à nos jours (en particulier après le 18^e Congrès national), la reconstruction d'un vaste système multicouche et institutionnalisé, un système consultatif/délibératif (selon la propagande du PCC), garantit que le PCC peut écouter et entendre les voix à l'intérieur et à l'extérieur du parti (mais pas dans tous les cas). Cette forme dialogique canalise également la communication État-société, le plus souvent

de manière descendante. Il y a aussi des délibérations spontanées à la base, ainsi qu'une communication ascendante forcée comme la résistance rurale constante (pétitions, protestations, soulèvements et lettres et visites, etc.)

En gardant ces doctrines et définitions à l'esprit, nous pouvons être témoins de la transition d'un leadership idéologique à une gouvernance plutôt pragmatique en Chine au cours des deux dernières décennies. Le PCC utilise de plus en plus la bonne gouvernance pour gagner du crédit politique et de la légitimité d'une part, pour proclamer sa supériorité sur la gouvernance chinoise d'autre part. Cette affirmation implique des accusations et des sarcasmes sur une gouvernance inefficace, une insistance excessive sur l'individualisme, des gouvernements faibles et un populisme croissant dans les démocraties occidentales. Et pendant que le monde entier répond à la grande épidémie de 2020, le régime chinois a une fois de plus démontré la supériorité de sa gouvernance autoritaire. Dans ce contexte, j'ai mené la recherche empirique et l'analyse de cas pour faire écho à cette transition. La gouvernance consultative/délibérative en Chine a une signification plus riche que son concept ; une compréhension très élargie fait référence aux diverses interactions et communications entre et entre le Parti, le gouvernement et la société. Ce modèle de gouvernance est fonctionnaliste. Il sert l'autoritarisme en Chine, et pour certains (en particulier la délibération à la base chinoise), il existe une certaine autonomisation du public et une délibération authentique.

Mais il faut noter que cette réévaluation critique de la démocratie délibérative de la Chine (*xieshang minzhu* 协商民主) n'est pas l'approbation de l'autoritarisme (alors que certains auteurs la qualifient de totalitaire, en particulier à l'époque de Xi). La centralisation du pouvoir politique est en effet plus évidente à l'époque de Xi Jinping. Les atteintes à la liberté d'expression, de presse et de publication, la répression des dissidents et la surveillance de l'ensemble de la société érodent la résilience autoritaire de la Chine. Mais quoi qu'il arrive, un régime à poigne de fer ne peut pas être durable. Si le PCC, au moins à court terme, n'a pas l'intention de poursuivre (partiellement) la démocratisation, alors les priorités des dirigeants, politiciens, observateurs, partisans et dissidents chinois sont de justifier l'affirmation selon laquelle le modèle chinois peut être parallèle aux modèles occidentaux sans démocratie. Je préfère ne pas tirer de conclusion sur l'avenir de la Chine. Ma conclusion dans cette thèse se concentre sur la démocratie délibérative chinoise, qui facilite l'autoritarisme chinois avec son côté fonctionnaliste, mais ne conduit pas à une véritable autonomisation du public.

Si nous allons au-delà de cette question spéciale de la démocratie délibérative en examinant plus largement un environnement politique plus large, il semble que nous, les humains, sommes confrontés à des défis sans précédent, en particulier face à l'épidémie et en repensant par la suite la gouvernance et les relations internationales (géopolitiques) dans le contexte post épidémique. De nombreux savants chinois comme Yu Keping, Yang Guangbin et Yan Jirong l'appellent « un grand changement inaperçu en un siècle (*bainian weiyou zhi dabianju* 百年未有之大变局) ». À ce stade historique, nous pouvons en effet voir que l'Asie menée par la Chine est en plein essor, tandis que les démocraties occidentales sont confrontées à une régression démocratique et à un déclin de la gouvernance (même si on ne peut pas facilement conclure si ce sera une tendance). Le nationalisme, le populisme, l'anti-mondialisation, l'extrême droite, le terrorisme, l'immigration et le racisme mettent à l'épreuve les valeurs démocratiques et la gouvernance occidentales traditionnelles.

Depuis la réforme et l'ouverture de 1978, la Chine a procédé à des réalisations économiques de renommée mondiale. Au cours de l'année 2020, la Chine a proclamé qu'elle avait éliminé la pauvreté absolue de centaines de millions de personnes. L'infrastructure de la Chine, les investissements à l'étranger et la haute technologie peuvent également concurrencer les États-Unis. Néanmoins, les discussions sur la réforme politique et la démocratisation de la Chine sont loin d'obtenir l'attention qu'elles méritent. La Chine a-t-elle une réforme politique ou un désir de poursuivre la démocratie ? Zheng Yongnian, théoricien politique à l'Université chinoise de Hongkong (Shenzhen) (ancien professeur de l'Université nationale de Singapour, directeur de l'Institut d'Asie de l'Est) soutient que, du point de vue de la politique comparée, si l'on adopte le modèle du parti occidental (s'il s'agit d'un parti libéral britannique ou américain typique ou parti continental européen) pour réinterpréter le PCC et ses réformes politiques, les conclusions doivent être négatives. Mais le fait est que le PCC a jeté les bases de la réforme politique de la Chine sous trois aspects : en menant la croissance économique de la Chine et en maintenant la stabilité sociale, et en établissant un système politique stable au cours des quatre dernières décennies. Comme beaucoup d'intellectuels chinois (ainsi que certains auteurs occidentaux), il a appelé l'Occident à éliminer les malentendus sur le PCC, afin que les deux parties puissent interagir harmonieusement.

Néanmoins, il ne faut pas être trop pessimiste. Il y a de plus en plus d'intellectuels chinois qui ont à la fois une formation académique nationale et une expérience occidentale. Ils construisent un pont pour les échanges sino-occidentaux. Cette thèse est également

réalisée dans un tel contexte. Je n'ai pas l'intention de comparer si la démocratie libérale en Occident est meilleure que le régime chinois, ou si le socialisme aux caractéristiques chinoises, tel que décrit dans la propagande chinoise, est supérieur à l'Occident. Ma contribution est de pouvoir réinterpréter les changements politiques de la Chine de manière plus juste et équitable dans une perspective politique comparative. C'est une ère d'apprentissage mutuel. Quels que soient l'autoritarisme ou la démocratie, le socialisme ou le capitalisme, le keynésianisme ou le libéralisme, ils ne sont pas des excuses pour s'isoler. La Chine doit adopter un environnement politique plus libre, comme la liberté d'expression et la liberté académique, de même, l'Occident devrait également apprendre à répondre efficacement à l'épidémie comme le fait la Chine. Cela peut être la meilleure réponse à une coexistence à long terme de divergences.

摘要

距離塞繆爾·亨廷頓（Samuel Huntington）著書《文明的衝突》已經過去近三十年的時間，他斷言“新世界衝突的根源，將不再側重於意識形態或經濟，而文化將是截然分隔人類和引起衝突的主要根源...文明的衝突將左右全球政治，文明之間的斷層線將成為未來的戰鬥線。”¹以儒家文化為支撐的東亞特別是中國正在逐漸崛起並挑戰西方的主導地位。在過去的三十年，這種力量的轉移和對抗以一種複雜的形式呈現，其不僅僅是文明的衝突，更夾雜著意識形態於經濟模式的爭辯，威權主義與自由主義的鬥爭，民粹主義，民族主義以及排外主義的高漲。大流行病更是進一步加劇了這些衝突。同年，在其《第三波民主化浪潮》的論述中對不管是軍人獨裁還是一黨專政的專制和威權政體民主化轉型寄予了厚望，這在弗朗西斯·福山（Fukuyama Francis）對西方自由民主作為人類最後的歷史論述中也得到了印證。

三十年後的今天再回顧這段歷史讓人唏噓不已。似乎歷史並未按照這些學者預想的那樣演進，二十一世紀的中國反而在中國共產黨的領導下更加強大。這使得西方不得不重新審視中國研究的種種問題。這種不管在範式上還是方法論上的轉向夾雜著西方國家對中國威權主義與政治體系的批判與恐懼，同時，也促使了一批務實的中國觀察者探究中國威權主義的韌性和長久維繫。這方面的碩果不可謂不多，典型的，如黎安友（Andrew James Nathan）‘威權制度化（authoritarian institutionnalisation）’的分析。當然，中國這套複雜的威權系統不僅有其韌性，而且於不斷的學習，適應中完善，有限度且可控的公民參與，吸納公眾協商，強化政策的回應性，加強對官員的監督和反腐力度，優化建立在精英基礎上的人才選拔等，都促進了中國威權的韌性。而本篇論文延續了這個思路，不僅致力於進一步從比較政治角度探究中國協商民主的概念，同時也從實證角度進一步論證了中國協商民主是如何促進和維護一個更為韌性的威權而非公民賦權。

無論如何為中國協商民主理論和實踐做本土化辯護，此概念與西方協商民主總有著千絲萬縷的聯繫。雖然關於中國協商民主的研究資料相當可觀，但卻有兩極分

¹塞繆爾·亨廷頓. 文明的衝突與世界秩序的重建（修訂版）. 譯. 新華出版社. 1993: 1

化之嫌，西方中國研究習慣性將中國公眾參與，諮詢和協商於威權相結合，認為此‘協商民主’更多為工具理性，典型的如威權協商（authoritarian deliberation）和威權諮詢（authoritarian consultation）概念，正如何包鋼教授所言，研究中國協商民主主要將協商性政治與協商性民主區分，協商性影響與賦權（如投票，普選）區分，以便更好理解協商與威權在中國的矛盾共存。而中國官方與本土學者則得益於中國日漸增強的實力和信心，將中國協商民主(consultative democracy)視為中國共產黨的理論和實踐原創²。在過去的二十年，協商民主逐漸構成了中國民主話語體系與治理的重要組成部分。然而，中西方關於中國協商民主的研究並非完全對抗，儘管協商或協商民主在不同語境和文化背景下可能呈現有所差異，但共識在於，建立在平等，自願基礎上理性的對話，意見的交換可以進一步培育公民社會，而這個互動的過程也將複雜的個人利益進一步釐清，為達成共同的善（common good）奠定基礎。而這個理解在中國語境下要結合中國的威權主義，共產黨的領導以及中國傳統（儒家）文化的影響。

具體的，延續中國威權制度化這一線索可以發現，開革開放以來，中國的政治改革（很多學者，如俞可平認為僅是治理的改革），尤其是政黨制度（共產黨領導下的多黨合作和政治協商制度）的完善在很大程度上奠定了中國制度化參與和協商的政安排，雖然政協在角色和功能上飽受詬病，但其在政黨制度中的‘裝飾’與精英協商的信息收集作用卻也在鞏固一個更為靈活的協商氛圍。除此之外，一些非正式，非官方的協商機構也在近些年蓬勃發展，尤其是在基層（農村及社區），民主的協商更容易在一個較為自治的政治環境中醞釀和產生。在此種背景下，我的案例研究選取了不同地域，領域及層級的立法諮詢（廣東惠州）和村莊協商（山東東營），旨在將前述部分對中國協商民主概念的分析實踐化，探究中國協商民主是如何在實踐中強化中國威權主義或者民主賦權（如果在基層協商中可以發現）。

²在與國內多位協商民主理論學家討論之後，一個大體的結論是，共產黨十八大之後，關於協商民主概念的爭論已然不是學術界的熱點，在其看來，協商民主在中國已經被賦予特定的政治意涵，即共產黨領導下的民主和治理形式，而西方建立在個人主義基礎上的自由協商不適合中國社會主義協商，這無疑為進一步就中西協商民主的比較關上了一扇門。

1 Introduction

“Deliberative democracy” refers to efforts, in both theory and practice, to reconcile the value of deliberation with other core democratic principles, such as political equality and the avoidance of “tyranny of the majority.” These efforts engage normative concerns about whether deliberation is worth achieving, and at what cost, in terms of other, apparently conflicting values. Deliberative democracy also engages empirical issues about whether more deliberation would make much difference and about the kinds of institutions that might better realize deliberative democracy.

- James S. Fishkin, 2008

Democratic decision making should be made without any “domination via the exercise of power, manipulation, indoctrination, propaganda, deception, expressions of mere self-interest, threats, and the imposition of ideological conformity”.

- John S. Dryzek, 1998

Democracy does not consist of a single unique set of institutions. There are many types of democracy, and their diverse practices produce a similarly varied set of effects. The specific form democracy takes is contingent upon a country’s socioeconomic conditions as well as its entrenched state structures and policy practices...Modern democracy, in other words, offers a variety of competitive processes and channels for the expression of interests and values associational as well as partisan, functional as well as territorial, collective as well as individual. All are integral to its practice.

-Schmitter and Karl, 1991

Conceptual Clarification on Some Key Concepts

To begin with, there are several key concepts that need to be clearly defined, and these conceptual understandings are interspersed throughout the whole thesis. They are: the West, indigenization, consultative democracy and deliberative democracy, genealogies in deliberative democracy, and consultative/deliberative governance.

The West: The West per se does not refer to a specific state but an ensemble with a high degree of self-identification distinct from the East or other non-Western regions. Marshall

and Williams (1982, p78) differentiate between the West and the *rest* in their book of *Great Map of Mankind*. This initial cultural-geographical concept of the West expands its scope from Western Europe to the Central, North and South Europe following the expansion of Christianity. Modern enlightenment weakened the role of religion in the public sphere and facilitated the politicalization of the concept of the West. Some basic ideas like democracy, freedom, equality, and constitutional government were proposed then. Ever since, this concept of the West has undergone a process of temporalization and spatialization (Zhang, 2020) along with the rapid economic development. The West is not limited to Europe geographically, it refers to those states or regions where Western civilization takes root. The United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, for example, have also joined its rank. After World War II, this notion eventually became a political concept that embodies the transatlantic culture of Europe and (northern) America. The concept of the ‘West’ used in this thesis mainly refers to (but is not limited) Anglo-American culture.

Indigenization: Most often, the translation from one language to another implies what has been called an indigenization (bentuhua 本土化), or what is called in the Indian context a “vernacularization”. That is a process which is not reducible to neutral translation, because it inscribes a concept or an idea elaborated in a very specific frame (in the present case, the international academy dominated by the Anglo-American literature and mostly written in the English lingua franca) in another local cognitive frame, giving it new signification. Such an indigenization process in the Chinese context is twofold, it does not only refer to an indigenized process of foreign theories and narratives, but also to the locally constructed theories (mainly but not limited of the CCP’s discourses) that have spontaneously flourished, especially in the past two decades. The discussion on indigenization of Chinese political science has been discussed by some Chinese pioneers like Yu Keping, Kang Xiaoguang, He Zengke and Li Qiang (Frenkiel, 2015). This departure to think about one country’s politics and political science more indigenously gives more leeway, especially for late-developing countries to seek more sources and inspiration in their own culture and tradition.

Consultative democracy and deliberative democracy: The idea of legitimate government should ensure the ‘will of the people’ is appearing in many variants. It is this rich heritage that facilitates the concept of deliberative democracy. Since it was first proposed, such an idea has always been entangled with some other democratic forms (or synonyms), like

representative democracy and participatory democracy in the first chapter, authoritarian deliberation and authoritarian consultation in the second chapter and the consultative democracy in the third chapter. Hence, disentangling diversity in democracy will enhance a more comprehensive understanding of deliberative democracy. Among these perplexing concepts, I will first of all focus on differentiating consultative democracy from deliberative democracy.

Since the pioneering work by Bessette, Joseph M. in 1980, social psychologists and, more recently, political scientists and democrats, have embraced the idea that democratic and legitimized decision makings can only be produced through a *dialogue* with the people, and this dialogue can be best described as deliberative democracy. Among its many criteria, the key dimensions in deliberative democracy refer to how a transformation is being achieved from ‘aggregative decision making’ (count vote) to equal and inclusive discussions. In this process, individuals are involved not only with final outcomes but also with the process leading to such outcomes. Most often, deliberative democracy is connected with public empowerment and a more radical idea of democratic. The concept of consultative democracy seems paradoxical, since consultation, even though it is frequently used in politics, is rarely connected with democratic decision-making. Consultation refers to consulting for preferences (especially in a large scale) in a one-way fashion. The concept of consultative democracy connects this ‘collection of preferences’ to democratic decision-making. It makes sense only when this link is positive, nevertheless, this process is lacking empowerment and the public is passively involved in the decision-making process. Consultative process and activities are consistently adopted and used both in democratic and authoritarian contexts.

Genealogy of deliberative democracy: Deliberative democracy, since it was first put forward, has gone through various generations. Hence, a genealogical analysis is helpful theoretically to capture the latest focus in deliberative democracy studies. For example, the first generation proposes the normative standards for deliberative democracy, the second generation focuses more on the theory’s operability, and the third generation explores an empirical turn (with a special focus on the deliberative system). Besides its theoretical implication, a genealogical analysis on deliberative democracy also tells more on how these latest trends are being practiced in real life.

Consultative/deliberative governance: Following some key elements in the conception of deliberative democracy and consultative democracy, this type of governance is to transfer

this ideal into practice. Most often, a consultative/deliberative method of governance is difficult to distinguish completely in real political life. This is not only because governance in practice is usually presented in a complex and hybrid form with public participation, consultation and deliberation, but also because we have different standards to measure deliberativeness in a governance process. A theoretical partition may have many overlaps in real practice. We should also note that governance in different cultural backgrounds may favor different approaches to achieve a so-called ‘good governance’ (as described in the fifth chapter). Nonetheless, even a consultative/deliberative governance approach is frequently advocated in modern governance, it still has to function jointly with some other methods like voting.

A note: There are nuances in the use of these terms in different contexts. These differences are not only presented in linguistic translations, semantics, and rhetoric, but connotations that are endowed in specific contexts. Very typically, deliberative democracy in China refers to the democratic discourse and governance form under the CCP’s leadership. Against this background, I used these terms differently and respectively according to plural occasions.

China has received more and more attentions in recent decades. Both positive aspects like the rapid economic growth and governmental innovation, and some negative sides like the increasing recentralization and violation of human rights that have been commented. For whatever reasons, the keyword *China* is increasingly appearing in the world political arena. If enthusiasm for Chinese studies in higher education, especially in the West, remains lackluster, the fear of China, and restrictions imposed by it³, are in part to blame. What I have noticed is that Chinese studies are polarizing between China and the West. That said, Chinese scholars are increasingly focusing on the socialist political studies with Chinese characteristics. This shift is based on the confidence brought by China’s growing power. Nevertheless, this also brings perils of capsulation. Western China scholars are questioning the simple democracy-authoritarianism dichotomy, but their analyses are not all devoid of ideological perspectives.

More political research needs to build bridges between these two sides. China’s influence can no longer be marginalized or simply ignored. In the eyes of the outside world, China’s

³It is increasingly difficult for Western Chinese authors accessing with first-hand information in China, especially after the epidemic in 2020. Travel restrictions have made many Western China studies only available from second-hand information, such as leaders’ speeches and party documents. Meanwhile, there are more censorship for foreign scholars doing research in China. These restrictions have prevented a prosperity of Western China studies.

political reform is far behind its economic development, and this one-party authoritarian political system has been consistently criticized. Nevertheless, those pragmatic politicians, theorists, and democrats have begun to turn their focus on China's authoritarian resilience and maintenance (e.g. Gilley, 2003; Nathan, 2017; Fewsmith and Nathan, 2019) rather than abandoning the paradigm of 'China's democratic transition' (Gilley, 2004; Minxin, 2006; Diamond, 2008). In this framing, besides Nathan's institutionalization of CCP's regime idea, the concept of deliberative democracy and governance is also crucial. Traceable clues can be further found in the Chinese official framing with a downplaying of the electoral (democracy) method while with the reemphasis of a more pragmatic deliberative approach in its democratic discourse and governance.

It is methodologically impossible to completely incline on either camp. I therefore have the ambitions to bridge and further reconcile the Chinese and Western political studies and facilitate a comprehensive understanding on contemporary China's political changes. These efforts intend to provide answers to many challenges, for instance, the xenophobia and eurocentrism. In this interaction, even though conflicts are bound to persist, further mutual understanding can be promoted on both sides. Efforts in this direction are obviously not enough. Bearing all those doctrines in mind, my work conducted in-depth justification on China's deliberative democracy on the basis of comparative politics between China and the West, with the first effort to clarify its conceptual and theoretical meanings, then further apply this idea in empirical studies. For one hand, highlighting the pragmatic- and efficient-oriented Chinese governance, and another hand, how this good governance roleplays in the authoritarian resilience.

Against this background, my dissertation focuses on the subject of China's deliberative democracy (*xieshang minzhu* 协商民主) with three parts of, I, deliberative democracy in the West (chapter one); II, a very conceptual reappraisal on Chinese deliberative democracy (*xieshang minzhu* 协商民主) (chapter two, three and four) and III, case studies of Chinese deliberative governance (chapter five). My objective is to thoroughly define China's deliberative democracy, especially conceptually. It is crucial for the contemporary Chinese political studies. My first focus is on the consistent debate between westernization and indigenization. For the last three decades, arguments among Chinese officials, academics and the general public have remained unsolved and sometimes backlashed. While the situation is getting better with the growing confidence in the indigenized Chinese studies, many expressions labeled as '...with Chinese characteristics (*zhongguo tese* 中国特色)' strongly

indicate such trend. Nevertheless, this leads to another predicament: the overemphasis on China's uniqueness renders Chinese politics incompatible and sometimes unreconciled with Western doctrines, worse still, leaving some political concepts ambiguous.

Therefore, I will critically conduct an analyze on the Western (China) studies and Chinese indigenized studies both in the theory and practice. This means, rather than antagonize the Western studies with Chinese internal ones like many Chinese authors do, I prefer to learn some lessons from these very long-lasting political theories (universal values) in the West, a Western lens can always provide a comparative counterpart to China. Simultaneously, I will avoid an overemphasis on China's uniqueness, this requires a careful rebalance between the westernization and indigenization. Only by paying these two efforts can we have a fairer view of China's relations with the rest world.

A deliberative concept of democracy is regarded as an innovation both in the normative (as a democratic form) and empirical (as a governance form) sense. If say, democracy is still a sensitive topic and always being carefully discussed in China, then, deliberative governance being a political innovation in a practical sense embraces its golden age in both the official promotion and academic facilitation in the last two decades. Yu Keping (俞可平), one of the most prestigious Chinese scholars (with official background) and democratic proponent has dedicated working on Chinese politics. Amongst his contributions, besides his assertion of 'democracy is a good thing' (Yu, 2009), he also conducted qualitative and quantitative research on Chinese good governance (e.g. Yu, 2010, see also Wang and Guo, 2015), in this toolbox, of which being considered firm linked with the CCP's legitimacy, it is covered a wide range, like building a service-oriented government, improving administrative efficiency, establishing a societal assistance system, alleviating poverty, expanding the social security system, deepening villager autonomy, ameliorating competitive elections, etc. These efforts are interpreted with how the CCP trying to provide public good to its people.

This endeavor is also captured by some western scholars. It can be seen in some translative works. Frenkiel Émilie, a French Chinese scholar, translated and analyzed some works written by Yu Keping, in her paper of 'Yu Keping, un politiste en Chine (Yu Keping, a political scientist in China)', she introduced some voices of Chinese politics and governance to the western world. Also, professor Yves Sintomer from Paris 8 University conducted a comparison between Chinese and French political science by saying that, "il y a quelque chose de rafraîchissant dans la confrontation avec la science politique chinoise...il mène une réflexion plus ample sur le bon régime, dans une optique pragmatique et prudentielle

plutôt que dans une logique qui se prétendrait d'emblée universaliste (there is something refreshing in the confrontation with Chinese political science...it leads a broader reflection on the good regime, in a pragmatic and prudential perspective rather than in a logic that would claim to be universalist from the outset).⁴” These studies are exciting, not only because they have introduced Chinese voices into mainstream (Anglo-Saxon) research (a world perspective), but more importantly, it indicates a change in the attitudes of some Western scholars, they abandoned the so-called mainstream studies by adopting a more pragmatic and head-up perspective to see what happened in China.

1.1 Anglo-American Deliberative Democracy

The last two decades of political theory have brought public deliberation front and center to the evaluation of democracy, and the deliberative turn has prompted large numbers of political theorists to agree that deliberation is the regulative ideal around which a more democratic and humane politics should be reconstructed. Also, deliberative democracy for many was precisely its promises to go beyond the limits of liberalism and recapture the stronger democratic ideal that government should embody the “will of the people” via public reasoning (Habermas, 1979; Barber, 1984) rather than preference aggregation. The very book *Deliberative Democracy and Beyond: Liberals, Critics, Contestations* by Dryzek (2002, p27) provides a clear and helpful map of this intellectual terrain. He claims that “the essence of democratic legitimacy should take authentic deliberation into consideration in the decision-making process.” Beyond this normative lens, much about deliberation and its role in empirical politics remains hotly disputed like how theorists answer questions such as what counts as deliberation, who should participate in deliberation, what kind of discourses are thus allowed in the deliberative arena, and what institutions best promote deliberation. These issues separate these theorists into some bewilderingly nuanced and overlapping camps.

Commonly, democrats like Mansbridge, Rosenberg Mouffe and McDonnell, they advocate different versions of deliberative democracy, firstly, confronting democratic deficits in liberal societies by critically reappraising its individualistic- and rationalistic-based framework (Mouffe, 2013). Secondly, seeking for new meanings for further reformulating the classical idea of democracy. As a result, the theory of deliberative democracy has

⁴Sintomer, Y. (2017). La science politique et l'innovation gouvernementale. À propos d'un texte de Yu Keping. *Través. Revue de Sciences humaines*, (17), 167-175.

evolved into a more mature concept. Simultaneously, numerous empirical studies have also enriched both its conceptual meaning and pragmatic utilization with some new findings: for instance, full consideration of a greater diversity of communicative forms such as testimony (Sanders, 1997), storytelling, greeting, and rhetoric (Young, 1996; Black, 2008), emotional intelligence (Griffin, 2012) and everyday talk (Mansbridge, 1999; Harris-Lacewell, 2004). More recent studies have focused on the institutionalization of deliberation (e.g. Hendriks, 2002; Fung and Wright, 2003; Reid, 2012; Johnson and Gastil, 2015) and the recent systemic turn of deliberative democracy (e.g. Niemeyer, Neblo, Steenbergen, and Steiner, 2010; Mansbridge *et al.*, 2012; Friess and Eilders, 2015; Owen and Smith, 2015), this turn facilitates a more practical study on deliberative democracy.

Calls for a more *down to earth* deliberative democracy study have led to some rethinking on the present scholarship, that is, how to apply this concept in everyday political activities and go beyond ideals, counterfactual conditions and procedures. These considerations refer to how to consider deliberative democracy systemically and how deliberation or deliberative democracy can be conducted in large scale. This blueprint shows great mercy with a beyond thinking to the core elements of ‘reason’ and ‘common good’ in deliberative democracy and assumes a complementary interlink among the individual sites in such a system. Say, such design remedies some empirical and legitimacy problems in unfavorable circumstances. Nonetheless, for more critical scholars, the most central question is whether a deliberative system design can further enhance a conceptual and normative development of deliberative democracy. As Owen and Smith (2015) assume, such a deliberative system potentially neglects the normative significance of practices between the citizens and of the distribution of deliberative capacities and mutual respect. The second concern is how to reinforce the connection and interaction among individual parts, who will decide the power redistribution in the deliberative system, etc. Such dilemmas hinder a pragmatic use of deliberative democracy.

Rostboll (2008) in *Deliberative freedom: Deliberative democracy as critical theory* explains that:

For better understanding deliberative democracy as a critical theory that should go beyond the debate among the different authors within factions both in theory and practice, to note, merits of deliberation are not merely to accommodate and uphold those preexisting differences, more preciously, to initiate processes of reflection about policies that are uncritically accepted by most people. This approach is going further to

tell public deliberation from ‘accommodation’ to ‘emancipation’, inside of which open a window for potential of comprehensive deliberation to achieve its emancipatory aims.

(Rostboll, 2008 p.113)

Such considerations give many possibilities and potentials for further rethinking the normative and empirical merits of deliberative democracy. Simultaneously pragmatic theorists begin to look into deliberation in a broader political context, for instance, both in democratic and authoritarian systems. Those consistent debates propel the deliberative democracy into a time-testing theory with rich practical meanings.

1.2 Chinese Deliberative Democracy (*Xieshang Minzhu* 协商民主)

Chinese political science in the sense of indigenization of political concepts and theories was only reestablished at the very beginning of this century. Its previous political evolution relied on Soviet politics (the first three decades after the founding of New China) and American politics (the three decades after the reform and opening up in 1978). In the new century, these extraneous political sciences are increasingly unable to explain and support the development of Chinese politics. Thus, a calling for the indigenized Chinese political science was put on the agenda against this backdrop. Nonetheless, this is by no means to conclude that such Chinese type of politics is isolating from the Western ones, albeit Chinese official propaganda and some intellectuals insist on demarcating from the Western politics, it is always wiser to think about Chinese politics in a more critical and comparative lens. Bearing these trends in mind, a conceptual reappraisal on China’s deliberative democracy (*xieshang minzhu* 协商民主) is conducted by mapping a panorama of this special issue from the perspectives of both Western China studies and Chinese studies. My study further relies on a deep analysis of studies on the authoritarian deliberation, authoritarian consultation in Western China studies and consultative democracy and beyond in Chinese academia.

1.2.1 Authoritarian Deliberation

For one decade, some deliberative theorists have begun to shift their attentions from the orthodox Anglo-American deliberative democracy studies to a more fresh non-Western perspective on authoritarianism. These efforts go beyond a simple dichotomous analysis

between authoritarianism and democracy, investigating deliberation (deliberative democracy) in authoritarian regimes like China for instance. He and Warren (2006, 2011, 2012, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018) reformulated and reconstructed the concept of ‘authoritarian deliberation’ with the further revisiting of ‘deliberation’ and ‘democracy’ in different political contexts⁵. Western observers are reluctant to accept this possibility and conclude that there may have possibilities of rational communication within an authoritarian political regime that blatantly violates human rights. This inevitably led to doubts about the democratic nature of what happened in China (O’Flynn and Curato, 2015; Weber and Froehlich, 2016). This concept indeed challenges both the monogenetic Anglo-American definition of deliberative democracy and the orthodox principles of deliberative governance and practice in the West.

He Baogang’s work raised heated debates. These discussions are based on the seemingly paradoxical coexistence between deliberation and authoritarianism, from the theoretical construction to empirical deliberative governance and innovation. Usually, this includes a cultural- and historical-analysis for further seeking indigenized moral and political sources; the comparative political studies for further highlighting the superiority of Chinese deliberative democracy; concrete (most often, grassroots-level) deliberative case studies, for instance, authoritarian deliberation on the Chinese internet, village, community, etc. Such flourishing empirical evidence further enhance the understanding of authoritarian deliberation both theoretically and practically. Nevertheless, conceptual vulnerability is also evident if authoritarianism always or sometimes allows for authentic deliberation at the grassroots level. If these existing cases (they are coined deliberative) can be strong enough to justify the fact that deliberative possibilities can truly exist when lacking regime democratization (He, 2011). The concept of ‘authoritarian deliberation’ has to be critically self-evolved both in its normative and empirical lens to become a time-tested theory. For this moment, generously calling everything deliberation amounts to letting the CCP off too easily.

The concept of authoritarian deliberation therefore did open a window for further understanding China’s deliberative democracy, governance, and political change. I would like to draw two tentative conclusions. Firstly, this authoritarian deliberation has only existed in the grassroots, and is adopted mostly for pragmatic reasons. That is to say, both

⁵This very term of authoritarian deliberation was first proposed in the book chapter (He, 2006, pp. 134-135) and later developed into a more rigorous theoretical reconstruction (He and Warren, 2011).

officials and the wider public *use* deliberation to solve practical problems. This *functionalist* side of deliberation has to do with their need to deal with many top-down and bottom-up uncertainties. Secondly, it is rather fair to conclude that such authoritarian deliberation is enhancing a more resilient authoritarianism rather than leading to democratization through public empowerment. This perplexing interaction is skillfully handled by the CCP both in its ideological propaganda and governance.

1.2.2 Authoritarian Consultation

The concept of authoritarian consultation⁶ was first proposed by He and Thogersen (2010, p23), then developed by He and Warren (2011) and Teets (2013). It was ultimately summarized by Truex (2018) with the description of, “the CCP is pioneering its own brand of consultative authoritarianism, that is, Chinese citizens cannot vote for the CCP leadership or even their representatives in the NPC, while the regime has introduced a series of new ‘input institutions’ to increase public voice on specific policy issues.” (see also Nathan, 2003). Although it overlaps with authoritarian deliberation, authoritarian consultation always refers to a more prudent and easy-to-control political activity. As defined by He and Warren (2011), authoritarian consultation is “a form of rule in which power holders use communication to collect the preferences of those their decisions will affect and take those preferences into account as information relevant to their decision-making.” The introduction of a set of limited participatory channels allows to blow off steam and postpone more comprehensive change. It allows the regime to learn something from citizens’ suggestions, but to maintain complete control over the policy discourse. These participatory channels cannot be considered fully *deliberative*, as the regime is not bound to actually incorporate citizen input in any way (He and Thogersen, 2010; He and Warren, 2011).

Undoubtably, both concepts of authoritarian deliberation and authoritarian consultation claim the non-democratic nature of Chinese politics. They refuse to acknowledge a

⁶This term of authoritarian consultation had been used by Harding (2010) to describe how the post-Mao political system formulated, “...increasingly recognizes the further need to obtain information, advice, and support from key sectors of the population, but insists on (...) maintaining ultimate political power in the hands of the Party”. Similarly, Hamrin (1987) also adopted this concept to describe how the Chinese state beginning to take the interests and views of intellectuals into account in the early 1980s.

democratic turn through such consultative and deliberative methods⁷, despite the existence of some emerging and innovative participatory, consultative and deliberative designs in China. If the deliberative quality of these grassroots practices is controversial, the concept of authoritarian consultation contains more prudence and criticism of Chinese authoritarianism. Scholars resorting to the latter concept focus more on political change taking place at higher administrative levels in China, at the center and provincial levels especially, in some key realms, legislation and national political reforms. This consultative approach, often called the ‘third way’ (He, 2010, 2011), is to be differentiated both from a very empowering deliberation and rigid political consultation and mobilization. It is more efficient in large-scale policy-making occasions.

Once again, these consultative designs are also adopted to strengthen authoritarianism. Although the Chinese regime speaks favorably about consultative democracy, its efforts to spread local reform experiments in this field are very limited. Its attitude toward them is cautious, and it likes to ensure that these reforms are firmly under central control. In this sense, as a matter of fact, what we are witnessing is a process of renewing and refining of the authoritarianism through consultative mechanisms. Such method is highlighted for good governance, accountability and responsiveness. This is a reciprocal process, for the one hand, the CCP’s authoritarian coercion can be tamed and regulated by some institutional arrangements. In turn, according to He and Warren (2006), consultation helps identify and articulate the preference of people, which enables the CCP to gain ability to legitimize policies by reference to relatively inclusive consultative processes. So far, such interactions are still taking place and cannot be simply overlooked and marginalized in Chinese authoritarian resilience studies.

1.2.3 Consultative Democracy (*Xieshang Minzhu* 协商民主) and Beyond

It seems that the Chinese regime has not been too entangled in the reinterpretation of deliberative democracy. The Central Bureau of Compilation and Translation translates it into ‘consultative democracy (*xieshang minzhu* 协商民主)’, at best, further avoiding some conceptual ambiguities. Consultative democracy in China already has a specific political

⁷He Baogang and others are quite optimistic about the deliberative practice at Chinese grassroots. They believe that deliberative politics in autonomous grassroots can thus coexist with the nondemocratic regime, it may shed light for China’s bottom-up democratization.

meaning. It is not deliberative democracy in the Western sense, but a form of people's democracy under the CCP leadership, which draws some inspirations from traditional Chinese culture and has been practiced through the CPPCC and United Front Work.

One has to stress that in the official framing, consultative democracy has two basic dimensions: first of all, the multi-party cooperation and political consultation system under the CCP leadership; the second refers to the social consultation and dialogue system. On the one hand, the CCP emphasizes the necessities for political consultations amongst the elites, especially but not exclusively with other officially recognized parties; on the other hand, it expands the political and sometimes social consultation to ordinary citizens. This idea of consultative democracy tends to replace (and is sometimes confused with) the Maoist idea of the mass-line: the Party and governments at national and local levels should have a close contact and develop a direct dialogue with the masses constantly.

Another concern is consultative legitimacy. Long-standing tradition in the social sciences favored a more interactive form of deliberation for justifying both the procedural (e.g. Karni and Safra, 2002; Tyler, 2006; Trautmann, 2009; Krawczyk, 2011) and resultant legitimacy (Lind and Tyler, 1988; Olken, 2010). Knowledge and enthusiasm on these limited legitimacy sources however seem to marginalize some other foci, for example, the consultative democracy. The CCP has reformulated this concept of democracy by adding some new meanings. Firstly, such an idea draws some inspirations from Chinese traditions and cultures. To date, Chinese dynasties inherited a long tradition of monarchs consulting ministers on the state affairs. Even though such consultations were unequal and superficial, the highest power was exerted after some consultation. Confucianism also advocates that power should be restricted by the people. This very hierarchical consultation (procedural ignorance with only focus on the results) is still very common in contemporary consultative democracy. In modern political framing, the CCP's ideological reinforcement and Mao's mass mobilizations and movements also reshaped this consultation and indicated such forms should be monopolized by the state.

Second, the equal participation and deliberation are not a *sine qua non* condition in consultative democracy. The concept of consultative democracy renders the CCP's absolute leadership and consultation less irreconcilable. Meanwhile, such idea continues the Communist Party's practical logic, that is, solving uncertainties and achieving good governance by further collecting and analyzing public preferences (Zheng, 2009). This interaction cannot only achieve the aforementioned practical purposes but also consolidate

the CCP's legitimacy by ameliorating performance (Brødsgaard and Zheng Eds., 2006; Landry, Lü and Duan, 2018). Consultation and good governance are the main legitimacy sources of the contemporary authoritarian regimes.

When China is mentioned in the realm of humanities and social sciences, quite a few authors unconsciously connect China with authoritarianism and associate many of the institutional designs with surveillance, monopoly, window-dressing and rubber stamp (e.g. the CPPCC). This is certainly correct; nevertheless, this analytical framework is increasingly antagonizing China with those Western democracies and fails to explain the maintenance of China's authoritarianism and its authoritarian rising. If this is the truth, pragmatic Chinese studies should envisage and further take consideration of consultations and its based democratic forms and governance for better understanding China's political changes.

1.3 Consultative/Deliberative Governance with Case Studies

Last three decades, democracies have faced the challenge of governance transformation, namely, how to check and balance the strong government with public participation and deliberation. This trend is captured by the deliberative governance, and such approach responds to the two dilemmas of dealing with the ever-increasing range of social problems and issues (Dryzek, 2012) on one hand, and remedying some poignant critiques against representative governance on the other. For the last decades, deliberative governance in liberal democracies has experienced a 'discursive turn' to plural sites and occasions by further enhancing the interaction between represented and representatives, voters and selected. In authoritarian China, deliberative governance mainly takes a government-led form, as well as some unstructured and informal types of public deliberation (Tang, 2015). Those efforts bring the public to political activities, especially through the expression of public concerns, informal debates and contested discourses, with some limited impacts on decision making.

Unlike conventional liberal democracy promoters who tend to seek the breakdown of the authoritarian regime and subsequent competitive elections, some deliberative democracy scholars consider state democratization of countries like China as a process of building up democratic capacity through deliberation (Dryzek, 2009). This school of China studies (mainly those deliberative democrats and sinologists surrounding pioneer of He Baogang formally based at Australian Deakin University and now National University of Singapore), has favored a deliberative approach that can be the potential impetus of public

empowerment, for instance, the mass line connects the public with the state, facilitates the interactions between those participants for many reasons, a top-down hierarchical pressure, or bottom-up spontaneous democratization. Nevertheless, this optimistic outlook has become increasingly uncertain, especially in Xi's era, who tries to rebuild an iron-clad domestic stability and political discipline. Hence, my approach of China's consultative and deliberative governance is to focus on its facilitations of the CCP's authoritarianism and consider public empowerment and bottom-up democratization (if any) as potential by-products in this process.

For further justifying my diagnoses, I conducted a six-month field work in China from 2017 to 2021. I mainly focused on two case studies, legislative consultation and village deliberation. My endeavor through presenting these two cases is not to emphasize the uniqueness of Chinese practice⁸, but rather to reconcile some Western narratives and doctrines into Chinese practice, which in turn, can also reference to the Western practice to a certain extent. Such an approach can alleviate the antagonism between the two camps. In view of the complexities of China's real conditions, my cases cannot exhaust all the circumstances of its rich practice. It can nevertheless indicate some new political changes in Chinese politics. O'Brien (2011) and many sinologists like Harding (1993), Cabestan (2007), Baum (2007), Perry (2008), Alpermann (2009) and Cho (2009), all warned that Chinese political studies, especially fieldwork, should carefully handle single case studies while not losing track of 'the bigger picture'. It nevertheless means Chinese consultative and deliberative governance on one hand guarantee some basic forms of interactions between and among the state and society. On the other hand, instead of rejuvenating citizenship and empowering citizens, this governance eases the tension brought by the authoritarian monopolistic power through consulting and deliberating with its people, and further facilitates China's authoritarian resilience.

1.4 Methodologies

For further facilitating my analysis on Chinese deliberative democracy concept and practice, I thus adopted discourse analysis and case study as methodologies. A discourse analysis is theoretically and normatively helpful for understanding how this concept of deliberative

⁸Sometimes, Chinese political studies have fallen into a narrow mindset that overemphasizes its uniqueness. It mainly manifests in the strict distinction or even rejection of Western research in the last two decades.

democracy comes into being in a context rich of Chinese cultural and historical inheritance, and new theoretical and practical meanings after the CCP's reformulation in contemporary China. Case studies can only have more practical implications and lead to a clearer and more profound concept of deliberation. My case study is based on some anthropological and ethnographic methods like individual and focus groups' interviews, genealogy and archive analysis, contextual (rhetorical, semantic, linguistic) analysis on party documents and regulations. Such efforts are highlighted for disentangling the complicated interactions between and among the Party, the state and the society, as well as the instrumental implications for deliberative democracy in China.

1.4.1 Discourse Analysis

Many discourse theorists present a counterweight to the Habermasian 'normative ideal' of communicative rationality. Discourse, they say, should be looked at in terms of what is actually done (rather than what should be done) (see also Flyvbjerg, 1998). Of what is done, discourse analysts aim to identify what has influenced the way a problem is defined. In their analyses, they include those elements that are mostly not a topic of dialogue but that do create possibilities for actors to act and/or create limits to what can legitimately be done (Hajer and Versteeg, 2005). Thus, the discourse is not just about how ideas are framed in words or discussion, it also refers to the practices in which specific ways of looking at things are embedded (Hajer, 1995). According to Hajers' framing of what accounts for discourse analysis, it refers to,

A specific ensemble of ideas, concepts, and categorizations that are being produced, reproduced and transformed in a particular set of practices and through which meaning is given to physical and social realities.

(Hajer, 1995 p.517)

As a result, discourse analysis prevails through the whole dissertation. It not only includes the analysis of the connotation of the Anglo-American deliberative democracy in the first place, more importantly, such methodology is adopted for understanding the Chinese discourse with further concrete semantic, linguistic, rhetorical and conceptual analyses. Simultaneously, this discourse analysis is conducted with a comparative political perspective between China and the West, indigenization and westernization.

1.4.2 Case Study

For further disentangling and applying this Chinese discourse into practice, I conducted six-month political fieldwork in China. This includes interviews, analysis of local genealogies, red tapes and political documents. To do so, in the case of legislative consultation, I interviewed 24 officials in the Huizhou Court and government and accessed some internal meetings through some preestablished links with the Huizhou Intermediate People's Court, Urban Construction Bureau, the Legislative Committee of the People's Congress, and the HPPCC. Also, I accessed some other judicial precedents⁹ from the other cities in Guangdong Province. In the second case of village deliberation, I mainly dealt with the grassroots governments, local cadres and villagers, this includes the Kenli and Liji Districts, Shengtuo Town and 16 villages under their jurisdiction. These multiple interactions were mainly carried out in the form of informal interviews which allowed me to be deeply involved. Also, the analysis of the town(ship) and village genealogies facilitated a traditional- and cultural-understanding on villagers deliberative thinking and behavioral logic.

⁹These judicial precedents are mainly referred to the regulation making in Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Zhuhai and Dongguan in Guangdong province.

Chapter One: Deliberative Democracy in the Western China studies

1 Introduction

Proposed as a reformist and sometimes even as a rather radical political ideal, deliberative democracy begins with the critique of the standard practices of liberal democracy (Bohman, 1998). In the early formulations of the deliberative ideal in 1980s, deliberation was designed and always opposed to the aggregation and strategic behavior encouraged by voting and bargaining (Cohen, 1989; Sunstein, 1991; Knight and Johnson, 1994). Simply defined, deliberation *per se* means mutual communication that involves weighing and reflecting of preferences, values, and interests regarding matters of common concerns, and deliberative democracy is putting deliberation in the *central* place (Bächtiger, Dryzek, Mansbridge and Warren, 2018), as such to distinguish itself from the individualistic and vote-centered representative democracy. Nonetheless, critics of deliberative democracy have continuously blamed it for being idealistic and have distrusted the deliberative approach because of the unlikeliness of its implementation. Those two critiques constitute the main challenges on its aspirational quality and cutting-edge studies.

Enthusiasm for deliberative democracy studies seems to be enduring, students in this realm defend the superiority of deliberation from comprehensive aspects. Nevertheless, many unsolved mysteries still remain: for instance, the paradoxical relation between deliberation and representation (a representative method favors more of the election than deliberation). Investigating the fundamental issue of representativeness in contemporary political theory (Phillips, 1995; Manin, 1997; Young, 2000; Mansbridge, 2003) can thus help approach this paradox. Representation and deliberation are both linked with democracy, while some earlier studies assumed an incompatible link between representation and deliberation, for instance, Madison, Hamilton and Jay (1987) therefore gave full evidence of the respective representativeness in an elected government and public deliberation in the decision making. This idea was reinterpreted in the masterpiece *The Federalist Papers* with “the public voice, pronounced by the representatives of the people, will be more consonant to the public

good, than if pronounced by people themselves.” Such conclusions were inherited from Rousseau’s thoughts on the ‘relationship between the public political participation and voting’. This analysis was revised in the more recent studies, rather than overemphasizing either of the two, a more general idea of reconciling public participation and deliberation into the representativeness (Chamberlin and Courant, 1983; He, 2015) may best describe a more vibrant democracy.

In this chapter, a reappraisal on several key dimensions of deliberative democracy is conducted, beyond a merely ontological examination. To begin with, it revisits the firm connections and sometimes discrepancy between representative democracy and deliberative democracy. In this context, challenges and criticisms faced by deliberative democracy, such as legitimacy problems, are responded by those practitioners with various institutional designs. Also, a genealogical review of deliberative democracy will contribute to a better understanding of the (mainly conceptual) transformation of the ideal in the first generation to the more down-to-earth and systemic concept of deliberative democracy in the third generation (some authors argue for a fourth generation). Simultaneously, the two entangled concepts of ‘deliberative democracy’ and ‘democratic deliberation’ are also highlighted in these genealogies, as the nuances between these two ideas reveal a more pluralism-legitimacy tendency in deliberative democracy.

Deliberative democrats like Bohman (2012), Parkinson and Mansbridge (Eds.) (2012), Niemeyer (2014), Curato and Böker (2016) advocate reconstructing a more inclusive deliberative system as opposed to most of the empirical studies on deliberative democracy, narrowly focused on some single episodes of deliberation. Rather than further developing a panoramic perspective, this narrow-mindedness may fail to develop dynamic and inclusive interactions amongst individuals in the deliberative system, in which the institutionalization of deliberation plays a crucial part. To better understand deliberative democracy, it is also of important to disentangle diversities amongst the various democratic forms especially participatory democracy, from which provides an inspirational framework to deliberative democracy. A vibrant and inclusive democracy can only be justified when these democratic forms are being further tested.

2 Conceptualizing Deliberative Democracy

Representative democracy conveys many modern political designs of democracy. The two components of ‘representation’ and ‘democracy’ and its combination constitute the very cornerstone of modern Western democracy, as ‘in almost every democracy in the world, citizens are represented by where they live’ (Rehfeld, 2005). Very often, the representative system design guarantees the people’s sovereignty and distribution of voting power without presenting in the scene, the elections contribute to the core part in the representation. Albeit many democrats argued that the elections cannot exhaust the meaning of representation and democracy, nevertheless, the voting-centered politics is predominant in the modern representative system, and more likely, consuming the public trust on representative government. This crisis lately revisited and remedied by a ‘talk-centered’ deliberative concept democracy, it advocates the open and equal dialogue between and among the social actors, rather than the mere aggregation of preferences. While like any other democratic forms, criticisms on deliberative democracy have never ceased. Against this background, if the crisis of representative democracy can find a turnaround in deliberative democracy, then what are the new implications for the latter remained a fresh terrain for students working on democracy.

2.1 Deliberative Democracy: Redeemer for Representative Democracy?

Democracy was once the most widely used word in present world, even in authoritarian regimes, which also claimed to be democratic. Beyond vague definitions, democracy can be simply put that, ‘people have the final say about the policies that govern their lives’ (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse, 2002 p21). In this sense, the representative system is by no means the whole picture of democracy with its seemingly alienation between the representatives and the represented. From Jean-Jacques Rousseau to some modern democrats, critics of representativeness have consistently endorsed the value of discussion and debate amid various democratic forms, as Rousseau put that the “general will of the people cannot be represented; it is either itself or something else; and no middle ground is possible.” Representation and democracy are not naturally interlinked, while the notion of representative democracy was first proposed by Alexander Hamilton in the letter to

Gouverneur Morris in 1777, this concept lately more developed by some main democratic contributors like Paine, Condorcet, and Sieyes. The relation between popular sovereignty and the representativeness, and the relationship of power that representation establishes (Urbinati, 2011) tell us more on the paradoxical linkage between the representation and democracy. The modern democracy is more likely to integrate pluralistic ingredients in this system, for instance, representation, political parties and deliberation. These elements co-function in a system of government that is permeable to the political equality and able to absorb the transformation of politics it engenders (Stasavage, 2007).

Beside the complex relation between representation and democracy, I want to investigate the link between deliberation and representation. More often, democratic deliberation exists in small-scale (mini-publics) occasions given the limits on number of participants, in certain cases, these participants can be competent and representative and acted on behalf of the absence, which makes deliberation ‘inherently representative’ (Bohman, 2012); it nevertheless raises a legitimacy problem and cannot have a binding effect of the decision making for those represented without being present on the scene. To many, especially in comparative politics, emphasis on one party is easier for the normative assessment of deliberation and representation respectively. This however contributes to the crisis of representative democracy¹⁰. Whether a deliberative approach can remedy or at best co-function with the other components for further contributing to a more compatible and inclusive democratic system remains the biggest challenge for the representative system.

2.1.1 Representative Democracy and Its Critiques

Undoubtedly, the representative system is one of the most far-reaching initiatives that democrats can find in political theory, especially in English speaking world. Over centuries, those efforts on the better understanding of representativeness *per se* and representative democracy have overlapped with the democratic pursuit. Nonetheless, representation is not associated exclusively with democracy. These doubts come from, for instance, the

¹⁰Traceable clues can be found in the special issue of ‘Is Democracy Declining?’ in the *Journal of Democracy* (2015), synonyms like democratic recession (Diamond, 2015; Levitsky and Way, 2015), democratic decline (Plattner, 2015), democratic collapse (Diskin, Diskin and Hazan, 2005; Tomini, 2017), democratic failure (Kapstein and Converse, 2008), ‘democratic rollback’ (Diamond, 2008; Merkel, 2010), ‘democratic disteroidal’ (Loveless, 2013) and ‘democratic breakdown’ (Maeda, 2010; Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán, 2013) are all indicating a decline of both the democratic qualities and regimes in English speaking states.

participatory democrats, those who advocate direct participation in politics, and deliberative democrats, who prefer the multi-dialogue and deliberation rather than a voting-based and -centered representative method. It seems that these critiques on the 'nondemocratic' nature of representation have constrained the further formulation of the 'representative democracy'. The main concern for democrats should be citizens' equal opportunity to practice direct democracy in the representative system, rather than representation itself (Urbinati, 2006). In other words, persistently insisting on the ideal of direct participation and deliberation will lead democracy nowhere. Thus, it is fair to say, representativeness contributes to the bottommost democracy.

Modern democrats describe democracy as the direct manifestation of sovereignty. Democratic mentors, Montesquieu, for example, combined self-government (sovereignty) and direct government (democracy) but opposed the representative-lead democracy. Rousseau's idea of people's direct participation in legislation is also against the representativeness. It says that representation means or is linked with the alienation of decision making in legislative settings rather than direct delegation. This confirms that representative democracy is an oxymoron. To many, especially for Carl Schmitt (1928), the representation can be only viewed as a democratic method but do not have the last word (see also Urbinati, 2006). Some radical theorists attempt to reconcile and even separate democracy from sovereignty. Iris Marion Young, for example, has argued that democratic representation can be explained without any reference to sovereignty; still, this paradox can hinder representation from being more democratic¹¹.

Rousseau's antipathy for representation lies in his doubts about the relationship between democracy and representativeness. There is however no superior design available than representation in real politics. To this sense, Kelsen (1999) and Urbinati (2006), for example, reexamined the dualism of *political* and *legal* binding of representation¹². The latter

¹¹This paradox is still the biggest challenge to the representative democracy. From Rousseau to modern democrats, their critics are that the people's sovereignty and the transfer of sovereignty/power to representatives are self-conflicting. That said, representative democracy is not only a contradiction in terms, but also incompatible in practice with the represented's remaining sovereignty and representatives' representation (unless it is a direct delegation).

¹²Kelsen's discourse on the 'true relationship of representation' explained the democratic form of representative government and the smooth functioning of these representative institutions. Namely, representatives must be appointed or elected by the represented (principle of autonomy); the representative must be 'legally obliged to execute the will of the represented' (imperative mandate); and the fulfillment of the representative's obligation must be 'legally guaranteed' (recall). While political bindings are more likely subjected to ethical norms that with voluntaristic nature, this legal representation requires a dependence between elected and elector. Nevertheless, this paradox is difficult to solve in democracy.

indicated the legitimacy problem of representative democracy which has been challenged by the increasing demands for political participation and deliberation. Beside these normative reappraisals, some authors revisited the empirical evidence on representative democracy in liberalism via quantitative analysis. Bernhard (2011), for example, conducted a study on several key components in representativeness, the voters, electoral institutions and elected representatives. Bernhard indistinctively equated people's satisfaction over election (performance of election for representation) with their satisfaction with democracy. These empirical observations indicated that the visible decline of competitive elections is eroding the quality and legitimacy of representative democracy¹³.

Regarding democracy, whether it is popular sovereignty-centered, or indirect/direct democratic-like, this elusive notion faces constant critiques over its unrealistic nature and connotation. For this reason, many pragmatic democrats try seeking more down-to-earth democratic government forms. This is the case of Joseph Schumpeter's elite democracy. In his concept, equal and competitive voting ensures the democratic inclusion and governance, and this democracy is based on elite minorities. Representation only exists between the public and those elected legislators. To note, the elite-based representative governance is still predominant in the Western politics, given that those well-equipped representatives chosen by voters can bring better governance. This is elitism explained, but according to Bernard (1997), elite-based representativeness can be practically important without endorsing elitism as a value.

Against this background, rather than overestimating the representative-based democracy, countermeasures should be given, especially in practice, to remedy those dysfunctions. Some preexisted solutions were already given by authors like Schmitter, Wessels, Beetham with reconsiderations of readjustment on a more inclusive and accountable representative system. Many rather radical democrats advocated the more participatory and deliberative approach against representativeness and the persistence of the 'pure' and 'absolute' procedural democracy. Nevertheless, they may fail for further carrying out their claims because of the complexities of the society or problems of scale. The most pertinent and long-lasting reforms and innovations are about ameliorating the representation in representative democracy, for instance, reconsidering the institutional mechanism of

¹³Public dissatisfaction on this decline may be manifested differently in different countries, regarding to the elections, political parties, parliaments, and those core representative institutions. Nevertheless, as a matter of fact, representative democracy is failing in this practical sense for many reasons, for instance, partisan manipulation on elections, money politics and so on.

representation, namely, election for further stimulating representative legitimacy (Katz and Wessels, 1999); reform of the parliament by rebalancing the citizens' engagement and parliament power (Beetham, 1994); paying special attention to the minorities, like women's representation (Alonso and Merkel, 2011; Dahlerup, 2013). Those efforts can alleviate some core deficits in representation brought by voting-centered and partisan politics.

Besides these classical debates on representative democracy, some new and emerging challenges should also be taken into considerations in contemporary international politics. For instance, the representation of NGOs, regional parliaments, and transnational organizations, migrants and refugees. These exogenous factors concern more of the performance of representative democracy, as well as its reaction to those challenges. Ankersmit (2008) therefore wrote that, "a comprehensive working model of the representative democracy should be established in the foreseeable future that with the demise of old political science." Democratic representation functioned on the synthetic efforts to reconcile the citizens and representatives, elected and electors, ontology and procedure, etc. Democracy in practice is remote from its descriptions in textbooks, and representation has also to evolve to better fit democracy.

2.1.2 Can Representation be Saved by the Deliberative Approach?

Ecological democracy is often said to necessarily contain a representative element if it is to function as a democracy-for-the-affected (Saward, 2003). To this end, unlike those earlier studies that had little to say about representation in deliberation (e.g. Urbinati and Warren, 2008; Saward, 2010), contemporary studies require linking deliberation and representation of some kind for further repatching the representative theory and enrich the deliberative system as well. Those links include the representation of social perspectives for those marginalized group members to make deliberation more inclusive (Kymlicka, 1995; Phillips, 1995; Williams, 1998; Young, 2000); the mini-public deliberations (Brown, 2006; Goodin, 2008; Smith and Setälä, 2017) with a two-dimensional nature that accounts for both the well-designed internal deliberation and descriptive representativeness of diverse social perspectives and forms of knowledge. In fact, these more paradoxical considerations trigger the questions whether there are any possibilities to reconcile deliberation in representation, and whether the deficit of representation can be *saved* by a deliberative approach.

Asking such questions is by no means implying that there is a total failure of the representative system, or, the overwhelming success of deliberation or deliberative democracy. It seems that both representative and deliberative theorists default an interdependency of both. These paradoxes lie in, on the one hand, modern representative institutions, for example, the parliaments, parties that cannot guarantee genuine deliberation within, and the widely seen debates in elected representatives are often antagonistic; on the other hand, the various deliberative institution designs that usually derive from a populist tradition (a direct participation on deliberation), for example, Leib's (2004) New England town meetings, and Fishkin's (1995, 1998, 2010) deliberative polling, those cases are criticized by its inclusiveness violation in the very mini-public. Yet, it is still paradoxical to put deliberation and representation simultaneously in one toolkit for further guaranteeing the deliberativeness and representativeness. Hence, a better understanding of these entangled relations between deliberation and representation is helpful for pursuing a more inclusive democratic system.

Representation was first understood as 'exercise of elite power', which had little to do with democracy (direct democracy practiced in Athens refused representation, but the Athenian juries served the representative functions). Linkage between representation and democracy is relatively modern. Those traceable clues in the early representative government design indicate that representatives prefer the constituencies' interests, while still acting for the nation, given that "parliament is a deliberative assembly of one nation, with one interest, that of the whole" (Burke, 1999). In this sense, representatives were considered superior to their constituencies and could make decision *for* them. This elite-based representativeness gave room for deliberation but with very limited scope (within representatives). A closer examination on the seeming democratization of representation refers to public deliberation in the representative election (Manin, 1997). In the modern representative government settings, political participation and deliberation are aimed at voting, and provide an elitist form of governance with democratic credentials (Urbinati and Warren, 2008). From the elite deliberation in representative governments to the public deliberation on election of representatives, these two concepts are entwined. Advocates of deliberation themselves do not entirely reject representative democracy, and unwilling accept the voting-centered representativeness and the alienation between representatives and the represented while emphasizing the interaction and deliberation between and among the representatives and voters. Nevertheless, this dichotomy between deliberation and representation inevitably remains.

At best, deliberation can only well-function within the representation (representative institution), mainly because of the scale and inclusiveness problem. Goodin (2003) acknowledges that representativeness could easily be more inclusive than most instances of face-to-face deliberation, while this is not a justification of the full legitimacy of the elite-based deliberation. Deliberation should be ratified and justified by the more interactive intra- and inter-deliberation. That said, deliberation is intertwined with representation for further ensuring the representative government to be more responsive and inclusive. For instance, deliberations amid those minorities and marginalized groups facilitate their voice heard and represented in terms of interests. Another see-saw of the intersection between deliberation and presentation is interpreted with various deliberative institutions, especially the mini-public settings. While this form guaranteed the inclusive and rational deliberativeness, it is also considered, at best, descriptive representative-like, given their primary claim to serve as representative institutions in themselves rests on their descriptive representativeness of diverse social perspectives and forms of knowledge (Brown, 2018) due to their non-electoral and -authorized nature. These designs may link the deliberation and representation somehow and enhance the democratic legitimacy. They nevertheless fail at rebalancing the two sides while improving a more representative or deliberative democratic system¹⁴.

If a deliberative system approach can (partially) remedy the legitimacy problems in deliberative democracy (mainly large-scale deliberation), then it can also unstack the intertwined relation between deliberation and representatives in such a system. That is, looking into the deliberative, democratic practices as a whole with interacting and interdependent parts. This argument means that representation, despite many criticisms, still constitutes the foundation of modern democracy, not only because of the size of modern polities, but also because representation allows democratic legitimacy to be further expressed, challenged, and transformed (Bohman, 2012). On this base, in a deliberative system, representation can promote deliberation in both general and particular settings, more precisely, as Bohman concluded:

¹⁴Many efforts have been paid to reconcile the deliberation and representation into political institutions and settings. Fishkin's (2009) deliberative polling, for example, in which combines the statistical representativeness with statutory representatives, which not only takes into account the representativeness but the openness and deliberativeness of decision-making. Nevertheless, in the Chinese case, this design has stagnated, not only due to China's authoritarian suppression on deliberation, but also because its complicated designs are hard to fit in real political life.

Thus, on the deliberative systems approach representation can more clearly show that some of the functions of representation are no longer tied to the standard legislative model, particularly in the wider public role in opinion formation and in creating the access to political influence against powerful interests...It must link free and open communication in the public sphere to empowered participation by citizens in decision-making. Every deliberative system must be able to generate communicative power out of the different spaces for communicative freedom opened by the deliberative system as a whole. Of course, this function is not achieved by representation alone. In this way, a deliberative system ought to be structured so as to promote political interaction across various levels and types of institutions so as to achieve the possibility for self rule.

(Bohman, 2012 p.87)

A deliberative system should and must connect with representation, not everyone can or is willing to participate in deliberation. Among the deliberative designs, small- or large-scale deliberation, such as citizens' jury, Parkinson (2006a) indicates that those present deliberators are competent acting the representatives to represent the absent. Hence, real-world deliberation is inherently representative. In a normative lens, representation, in most democracies, guarantees the equal and free communicative actions into a deliberative system, and such a system can transfer this action into communicative power. In other words, this deliberative power can turn deliberation into real influence¹⁵. Also, such deliberation legitimates the representative claim by providing more interactions and interconnections between the representatives and the represented.

As Saward (2010) wrote, representation should 'find and put itself in place' in a deliberative system. In a nutshell, deliberative democracy theory appeared later than representative democracy, and the former was based on the criticism of the representative government. So far, no evidence indicates the self-encompassing of the two discourses. In the best condition, the democratic representation requires more attentive and inclusive interactions and deliberation to justify people's reason for better decision making; while deliberation should also be based on representation, for deliberation in different scales, groups, organizations, minorities, transnational bodies, etc. Bohman (2012) argues, no single forum,

¹⁵Bohman (2006) noted the interconnections between deliberation and representation in a deliberative system, namely, the role of representation is in the first instance to generate decision-making authority, while then looking into those representative activities in the powerful representative institutions, legislation in the parliament, for example, Bohman concluded "this representation is often also clearly deliberative". While what may remain arguable that in some modern practices, if this burdensome, sometimes partisan argument and bargain can be really deliberative is still vague.

however ideally constituted, could possess sufficient deliberative capacity to legitimate various decisions and policies. Therefore, these two discourses are always complementary.

2.2 Mini-Public and Large-Scale Deliberation

Deliberation has to be practiced in real word, both for small- and large-scale, there are already a number of contributions to this empirical thinking with various designs. Some mini-public deliberative practices, such as the citizens' jury, deliberative polling, are widely experimented in different political context. Nevertheless, such settings only include a small portion of affected citizens disconnected from the real word. Some democrats, led by John Parkinson, Jane Mansbridge, James Bohman, and Simon Niemeyer, therefore proposed a deliberative system approach to accommodate large-scale deliberation, within which those individual sites (including mini-public deliberations) are interconnected and function conditionally and respectively in an organic whole. Such a blueprint also has its critiques, for instance, its legitimacy problem. Thus, in this part, these two main deliberative types, as well as their critiques, are reexamined for a better understanding of the practical meanings of deliberation.

2.2.1 Mini-Public and Democratic Deliberation

Calls for going being mini-public deliberation indicate a rethinking of the applicable scope of deliberation. Nevertheless, the small-scale (mini-public) deliberative discussions on the specific political issues among representative samples of ordinary citizens still function as the democratic and legitimized venue of deliberation (Fung, 2003). The complexities of modern governance make it impossible to engage all the citizens in discussions for every issue, even for the most attentive public. That said, aggregative consensus or decision making have to be binding both those representatives and citizen represented. This representative system is now criticized, as aforementioned, for the disconnection of representatives from the represented. Nevertheless, the good reasons for maintaining both the representativeness and deliberativeness can be found in the small-scale deliberation, such as the deliberative polling, citizens' juries, and consensus conferences, at best, the mini-public deliberation achieves mostly what deliberative democracy look like. Deliberative democracy in the latest research agenda expands its scope to a broader vision - the deliberative system. Against this background, I will reexamine two questions in this part, how to establish more comprehensive evaluating standards for the mini-public

deliberation both regarding its procedural settings and outcomes and how to reconcile the mini-public deliberation into a deliberative system.

To note, the (potential) persuasion and influence of the mini-public deliberation are based on the well-designed deliberative settings and procedure (e.g. the deliberative polling), as well as the reasoned deliberation among a group of rational citizens. That said, if one qualifies mini-public deliberation as the authentic deliberation venue, these prerequisites need to be fulfilled. In their analysis, like Mouffe (2000), Chambers (2003), Fishkin (2009) and Landemore (2013), mini-public deliberation is important in the reasoned deliberation among participants, where mutual understanding, free expression and reciprocity prevail, rather than decision making. Nevertheless, how much influence a deliberative mini public can have on the wider decision-making process is unclear (Grönlund *et al.*, 2014). How binding the decision-making is for those represented also remains unknown. Finally, the quality of the decision-making (Warren and Gastil, 2015) also needs to be revisited. These theoretical and empirical challenges need to be reevaluated thanks to instructive and fairer standards.

John Dryzek (2010), proposed a normative evaluation of the deliberative effectiveness and quality, including three key criteria of authentic deliberation with preference-formation in a non-coercive fashion; inclusive deliberation with the full participation of those affected with the equal opportunity; and consequential deliberation with the influences on both representatives and represented. Steenbergen, Bächtiger, Spörndli and Steiner (2003) also developed a more empirical Discourse Quality Index (DQI) that serves as a quantitative measure of discourse in deliberation, with the revisiting of the participation, and the justification and respect in deliberation. My analysis of (mini-public) deliberation focuses both on procedural deliberation and its outcomes. I also focus on a pluralistic legitimacy resource in democratic deliberation. It seems the common idea of the ‘rational consensus’ in the very normative dimension is becoming the ‘right answer’ of what deliberative democracy should reach. As I argued before, ‘reason’ and ‘consensus’ cannot be sufficient to support a justificative deliberative democracy. Nevertheless, a deliberative process can be checked and balanced to produce maximum possible consensus other than exact decisions. As the ‘intersubjective consistency’ indicates, meta-consensus may serve as an ideal deliberative end (Niemeyer, 2011). This can also ease the tensions between the decision making (a larger scale) and its binding force.

As for the outcomes, in the best case, there are strong interlinks between the mini-public deliberations and the final decision making. If not, such deliberations may fail in their legitimized bindings. This legitimacy crisis has two reasons: firstly, manipulation of the deliberative outcomes (Edelman, 1985), as Niemeyer (2011) states that “elites strategically us[e] arguments that invoke particular symbols to manipulate outcomes in a public sphere that is dominated by political spin doctoring.” This manipulation on decision-making (after deliberation) buys political legitimacy in a legitimized way. Secondly, mini-public deliberation can or may reach consensus in a small scale, while the dependency with the large scale decision making remains opaque. For instance, Caluwaerts and Reuchamps (2012) conducted several mini-public experiments in Belgium and they concluded such practices are valuable as regards the criteria of the quality of representation, the openness of its agenda and quality of participation. However, such experiments failed to connect with a broader decision making (national or even transnational) and deliberative system.

Hence, it is important to incorporate mini-public deliberation into the deliberative system. Small-scale participation and deliberation are easier to design and reach. As a coordinated and inclusive deliberative system indicates, every individual site can interact in multiple ways in such a system. As Chambers (2009) puts, ‘unless we have a good grasp of how the broader democratic context can be shaped to complement, or at least not undermine deliberative experiments, then many of the democratic advantages of mini-publics will be lost’. Then what are the concrete measures to keep mini-public deliberation from distortion and how to reconcile this deliberative site in a deliberative system and collectively produce deliberative outcomes? To answer this question, besides the aforementioned efforts to facilitate the intra deliberative effectiveness and qualities by emphasizing both the deliberativeness, representativeness and legitimacy in mini-public deliberation, it is important to focus on the interconnectedness of mini-publics with the deliberative system.

To begin with, mini-public deliberation, when a part of the deliberative system, should qualify with the three standards of authenticity, inclusiveness, and consequentiality (the three diagnostic criteria for assessing the deliberative system coined by Dryzek (2009) as ‘deliberative capacity buildings’). Curato and Böker (2016) expanded these criteria with deliberation-making, seeking legitimacy, and capacity-building. That said, a reconsideration of a deliberative system refers to different deliberative sites fulfilling different functions (Fung, 2003). Mini-public deliberation fulfills all these criteria but not necessary in a

deliberative system. For instance, mini-public consensus is consistently facing legitimacy problems, especially for nonparticipants. Nevertheless, when placing such practices in a deliberative system, those legitimacy limits may dispel conditionally. For example, in the very case of G400 (randomly selected 400 participants) in France and G1000 (randomly selected 1000 participants) in Belgium¹⁶, table meetings (usually 10 to 20 participants) can ultimately ensure authentic deliberation (sometimes participants will intersect discussing in other tables). This kind of deliberation does not point to any decisions and this mini-public deliberation enhances the understanding of the project and mutual respect for other participants, also transmitting such knowledge to a wider public (Niemeyer, 2014). There is no legitimacy binding for the mini-public deliberation especially in the whole project. Hence, to better describe a deliberative system, we can say that all the single sites are functioning simultaneously in a synthetic way.

2.2.2 Deliberation in a Large Scale

Among the many criticisms of deliberative democracy theory, scale problems always bear the brunt. Though small-scale deliberations are still vitally important, the regional, national and even international problems pose new challenges to the scale deliberation. While this is not a bad thing, Madison (1961) stated that, “the vast scope of the nation would, rather than making democracy harder, help sustain it...size would protect the nation from the worst extremes of factionalism and tyrannical majorities”. From the beginning, deliberative democrats like Madison were enthusiastic on the institutionalization of deliberation. They have designed many deliberative institutions to promote authentic reflective dialogues, but any kind of institution has a scale, large or small. But Chambers’ (2009) has asked: ‘has deliberative democracy abandoned mass democracy?’ This can be a realistic question, given that all deliberative designs are connected with representation, election, referendum of those mass institutions. Rather than looking into how these small-scale deliberative settings facilitate mass democracy or not, reverse thinking should concentrate on how to make mass democracy itself more deliberative (Chambers, 2009).

¹⁶Much information can be found on the public debate organized by commission nationale du débat public français, especially the case of la Programmation pluriannuelle de l’énergie (Bourgeois, 2018). The G1000 project was organized by a group of citizens in Belgium (Caluwaerts and Kavadias, 2014; Caluwaerts and Reuchamps, 2012, 2015).

The challenges facing large-scale deliberations are that they are asymmetrical, highly mediated, unequal and disorderly. These deficiencies can however be improved in a friendly deliberative sphere. The first step is the wide civic engagement: only when citizens are included, can it be possible to deliberate, whether it is face-to-face or representative deliberation. At least those small-scale deliberative designs have proved to efficiently counteract today's weakened public discourse and constrained forms of public participation (Friedman, 2006). The question follows, how to scale up these small-scale deliberations?

For further disentangling this puzzle, it is important to figure out what hinders large-scale deliberations. Let us first focus on the division of labor. Even if individuals face a friendly, favorable and accessible deliberative atmosphere with fair participatory opportunities, money, profession, passion to participate and the complexity of the issue are all making large-scale deliberation impossible. Second, misinformation, the post-truth era makes it difficult for citizens to have enough information, ability and enthusiasm to tell the true from false, which can also discourage their participation in deliberation. Third, there is a negative correlation between deliberation and scale. Mini-public deliberation is easier to design, and in the past three decades, some authentic cases of deliberation have taken place. Nevertheless, if deliberation is extended to large geographical scale, most often, it will decrease the intensity and coherence of the deliberation. Fourth, the authority facilitation is needed. Large-scale deliberation usually requires more energy, money and material, which is difficult for individuals to manage. As a result, official facilitation is necessary, yet not all officials are willing to sponsor such large-scale deliberation, given that this deliberation can be associated with inefficiency and chaos.

Efforts to solve this scale problem are both theoretical and methodological. By discarding a mere focus on individual sites in deliberative democracy as well as their interdependence in a larger system, many deliberative democrats began a 'systemic turn' in deliberative democracy. The idea is to bring those individual deliberative institutions and processes within a whole. This theoretical assumption brings deliberative democracy in some large-scale societal terms, with possibilities of deliberating outside single deliberative sites. In this system, all parts are ideally interacting with and complementary to each other, the whole system in turn provides possibilities for rechecking the pros and cons of the

individual parts. This ideal, in a way, responds to the increasingly complex and expanding transnational and transcultural communication¹⁷.

By reviewing some existing deliberation technologies, some authors (e.g. Shrager *et al.*, 2010; Klein, 2012; Curato and Böker, 2016; Hendriks, 2016; Ercan, Hendriks and Boswell, 2017; McKay, 2019) try to link the individual deliberative parts with the deliberative system. For example, in Curato and Böker's (2016) research agenda, they proposed three criteria for how a good mini-public can fulfill its role in a deliberative system, namely, *deliberation-making, seeking legitimacy, and capacity-building*, these requirements somehow guarantee the legitimacy of deliberative democracy (Parkinson, 2006; Niemeyer, 2014), also, they further justify how democratic decision making is being made after a large-scale deliberation. Nonetheless, we should not simply think that a deliberative system can (totally) save the deliberativeness of the individual deliberative sites, as Curato and Böker (2016) concluded, this systemic conception cannot plausibly imply an 'excuse' for any non-deliberative bodies or processes, the generic message that such bodies-for example mini-publics-can still enhance overall deliberative quality now prompts a closer examination of the ways and the circumstances in which they actually do.

2.2.3 Legitimacy Problems in Deliberative Democracy

Whether it is the small or large-scale deliberation, such designs are consistently facing legitimacy problem. This problem is due to many reasons, for instance, the stretching of the concept of deliberative democracy, which refers to some undemocratic usages of this term (Steiner, 2008). As Parkinson (2006) explains, "theorists and practitioners from starkly contrasting traditions have applied the deliberative democratic label to everything from radical activism and protest, to the consultative forums engaged with the state, to representative assemblies, to the deliberation of small groups of judges, even to the internal processes of making others 'present' in an individual's own internal deliberation." The scale problem also brings a legitimacy dilemma to deliberation. According to the classical explanation of deliberative democracy, the concept of deliberative democracy accounts for the legitimacy of the decision making, in other words, decision is made based on the participation and deliberation among those who are subject to it, but the scale problem

¹⁷Critiques of a deliberative system are crucial. We will see them in the third part of this chapter.

and societal complexity make it impossible to fulfill this ideal requirement. Some other aforementioned reasons, for instance, the lack of representativeness in the mini-public deliberation, manipulation on the procedural and consequential outcomes all indicate the legitimacy deficit of deliberative democracy. Therefore, the proper handling of the legitimacy problem in deliberative democracy is necessary to distinguish it from its rivals and promote it.

The legitimacy crisis in deliberative democracy is confirmed in reference of the last three decades, for instance, Cohen's (1989) expresses the idea that 'outcomes are democratically legitimate if and only if they could be the object of free and reasoned agreement among equals', which cannot be achieved with unequal status in money and power, for example. Benhabib (1996a) argues, 'legitimacy in complex democratic societies must be thought to result from free and unconstrained public deliberation of all about matters of the common concern'. Nevertheless, collective public references and acts are difficult to capture when faced with the complexities of the society; Dryzek's (2001) explains that 'outcomes are legitimated to the extent they receive reflective assent through participation in authentic deliberation by all those subject to the decision in question', but this authentic interaction is usually limited in small scale. It seems that deliberative practices cannot deliver the legitimate outcomes defined by the theory given to the aforementioned defects. Against this background, I thus reexamined four core dimensions of procedural condition, other communicative forms inclusion, the scale problem and the paradoxical relationship with representation, to seek for an enhanced democratic deliberative legitimacy.

According to the normative framing of deliberative legitimacy (e.g. Cohen, Benhabib, Dryzek, Habermas, Thompson, Goodin), legitimized decision-making derives from the free and equal deliberation of those affected. To note, these requirements apply both on the decision-making procedures and decision per se. Deliberative democrats are always enthusiastic in the procedural pursue, for instance, Gutmann and Thompson (1996) claim that, deliberation of a certain kind, is a desirable feature of the healthy functioning, dynamic democratic system, in which deliberators have to follow various procedural conditions, communicative competence, reciprocity and inclusiveness. According to Dryzek (2000), the deliberative process is a process within which participations are persuading and to be persuaded in the multi-interaction; participants should be reason-giving rational-based and willing to attend in the deliberation (Mansbridge, 2012). It is exactly these ideal assumptions that render deliberative democracy vulnerable as regards its democratic

legitimacy, since, especially in practice, these discursive procedural strands are difficult to reach (especially in a coordinating sense in a deliberative system). The more imperfections, the more legitimacy problems emerge.

A deliberative system is designed for integrating plural communicative forms (besides reason) within, like rhetorical expressions, storytelling, emotions and some other less-reasoning forms. To O'Neill (1998), there is a compatibility that linking the persuading effect between rhetoric and decision that similar as reason. Following this trend, later deliberative democrats like Iris Marion Young (2000) and Lynn Sanders (1997) include other communicative forms (rhetoric, emotion) in this system by noticing that the solely reason-based forms sometimes marginalize subordinate and minority groups. For Mansbridge *et al* (2012), this inclusive deliberative system is aimed at solving the scale problem, "it expands the scale of analysis beyond the individual site...develop among and between the sites over time". It seems that these efforts redeemed partially authentic deliberation in its conditional process. Nevertheless, this approach brings new legitimacy problems by risking labelling everything 'deliberation', and students in this realm have to further justify the legitimacy of other communicative forms as this justification should not prevail over reasoned debates.

As for the scale problem, it seems that large-scale and authentic deliberation and legitimized decision-making are rarely related, as bringing mass public into one deliberation changes the dialogue into speech-making. Also, it is illegitimate to impose binding decisions to those affected while not participating in the forum. Confronting this dilemma, efforts have been done by political theorists, philosophers, public policy scholars, empirical political scientists, and practitioners. For instance, Parkinson (2012) has proposed several extant solutions to the large-scale deliberation by further distinguishing micro- and macro-deliberation in different occasions. Large-scale deliberation concerns the constitution, and legislation such as basic justice, while small-scale (mini-public) deliberation is more likely to produce authentic deliberation. This scale problem can also be fixed by representation, as large-scale deliberation inevitably requires indirect representatives (whatever representative type). If so, reconciling deliberation and representation in a large-scale deliberative system requires democrats to handle the legitimacy problems from both sides.

This problem has been highlighted but not dealt with by these deliberative democrats insofar. I will not discuss the thorny question of representation in depth, that is how representatives are chosen, and representative types in deliberative system. I only focus on

the legitimacy problems of representation in (especially large-scale) deliberations. Since anti-elitism democrats may reject small-scale deliberation, nevertheless, they cannot refuse representative deliberation. John Parkinson (2003), in a way, proposed several solutions for response, for instance, the trustee model of representation is more favorable to large-scale deliberation than to the other forms, “because of the condition of deliberation that participants be open to persuasion. Indeed, the idea that preferences are transformed as they confront others is one of deliberation’s major strengths. The representatives in a deliberative moment cannot act as delegates, they are bound by previous instructions from principals.¹⁸” Such representation in deliberation can further enhance a close interaction inside and outside the deliberation, between representatives and represented (those who are affected and bounded by the decision). While I am not convinced and it may remain problematic, if this application of representation in large-scale deliberation can be the same as representation in the representative system, since the former requires more interactivity and subjectivity in a deliberative activity than in representation.

Once again, if these four core issues of the procedural condition, other communicative forms inclusion, the scale problem and paradoxical relationship with representation cannot be delivered, the concept of deliberative democracy will not distinguish itself from its rivals. By realizing these gaps, on one hand, such legitimacy problems may lead to a comparatively limited legitimacy of deliberation, per contra, promoting a more considerable democratic origin. On the other hand, both the small- and large-scale, individual and systemic deliberative designs are rendering this legitimacy problem no longer acute. As Parkinson (2003) argued, “a reaching-consent is far from legitimized, genuine legitimacy is built over time by discursive, critical examination of institutions and their actions.”

2.3 Three Generations of Deliberative Democracy Theory

Deliberative democracy nowadays is becoming more amorphous and diverse. When looking back, such a concept and its theoretical reconstruction always keep contingent with the adoption of some new changes, ideas and interpretations. As Elstub and Gagnon (2015) put it:

¹⁸Parkinson (2003) himself also admits that, both trustee and delegate representation are accountable to and authorized by their principals, since there is no pure trusteeship or pure delegation.

Definitions of democracy and deliberative democracy are not imprisoned by their many interpretations and ideologies that make both seem morphological. There are some core concepts in play that we can use to determine whether something is a democracy or a deliberative democracy. These core concepts provide boundaries for valid interpretations to be made so that we are not left with the meaningless and vacuous use of these terms where basically they come to mean anything to anyone.

(Elstub and Gagnon, 2015 p.112).

Following this logic, it is important to further map this traceable clue on the genealogical deliberation, say, from its original meanings (e.g. Jurgen Habermas, 1985a, 1985b, 1991; John Rawls, 1999, 2001, 2005), where deliberative democracy's great strength originates from the normative justifications, then to what we called the 'empirical turn' (the deliberative system) in the third (some authors coined a fourth) generation. Such a mapping of the deliberative generations incorporates both the boundaries and overlaps of each generation and indicates where we are in this special issue. In this discussion, I highlight a heuristic question of the justification between deliberative democracy and democratic deliberation, since this question not only connects with and within these deliberative generations, also it intersperses in the analysis of the systemic deliberation and some core issues of deliberative democracy theory, for example, its legitimacy problem.

2.3.1 Genealogical Analysis of Deliberative Democracy

Deliberative genealogy helps sorting out several distinct generations of deliberative democracy while portraying the focus and latest academic arguments in each stage. Such an approach also provides opportunities to reexamine those limitations and overlaps amongst generations. To date, there are already three rather distinguishable generations of deliberative democracy; namely, the normative construction of deliberative democracy, institutionalization and systemic deliberative democracy. It is still arguable that the fourth generation nuances the third generation. The growing body of literature developed during different stages outlines various merits of deliberative democracy in both theory and practice, the core dimensions like legitimacy and representativeness problems (Parkinson, 2006), the relationship between public deliberation and decision-making (Dryzek, 2010b), deliberative scale problems (Warren, 2007; Mansbridge, 2012) are all therefore intersecting in these distinguishable generations.

The “first generation” thinkers elaborated the deliberative ideals, and set out the normative value and the justification for deliberative democracy. This concept has originally been defined by philosopher Habermas (1996) in a highly idealized way, “a good deliberation was supposed to only rest on the ‘forceless force of the good argument’ with potentially all people concerned taking part on an equal basis, sincerely motivated by the search for the common good and consensus-building”. Jürgen Habermas and John Rawls took the leading roles in this normative theorizing and originate founding of deliberative theory (Habermas, 1985a, 1985b, 1991; Rawls, 1999, 2001, 2005; Kant, 1781, 1790, 1788, 1898). They took ‘reason’ and the ‘common good’ as the main criteria rather than any other communications and decision-making forms. Despite some revisions of these classic doctrines by later generations, these arguments have established the basic principles of deliberative democracy theory insofar, and are still efficient for criticizing practice.

The second generation was mostly composed of Anglo-American political theorists, like Bohman (1996) and Gutmann and Thompson (1996). Their analyses have strong institutional implications, but their statements still retain strong normative implications. Nevertheless, efforts made in this generation render the concept more compatible with the empirical practices simultaneously, implying a rhetorical lens (reason-like communications) to convince the audience while keeping a reasonable coherence. That said, these synonyms and reason-like forms facilitate deliberative democracy, but not necessarily. Such a transformation constitutes a pluralist democratic resource to deliberative democracy and indicates strong practical means, while it mainly refers to the institutionalization. For instance, Dryzek (2006) focused on the international decision-making in a global (large-scale) sense, while he also promoted the mini-public designs.

The third generation begins with and matures in the ‘systemic turn’. A deliberative system, as Mansbridge *et al* (2012) notes, “takes the deliberative democracy as a whole in political system by composing complex and various entities instead of engaging into the single deliberative institutions.” A systemic approach has been mentioned sporadically in many authors’ discussions (e.g. Habermas, 2005; Dryzek, 1990, 2010, 2011), but it is Mansbridge (2012) who outlined the blueprint of a deliberative system with its functions, operations and interpretations. The later work *Deliberative Democracy in a Large Scale* echoed and confirmed that a deliberative system can conceive and promote deliberation on a mass scale with a further division of labor. The latest scholarship on the genealogical analysis of deliberative democracy identified itself as the fourth generation, especially the pioneers of

Elstub, Ercan and Mendonça (2016) that go further on the ‘deliberative system’ through bringing nuance of the first three generations. In their analysis, the third generation is mainly “the design of deliberative institutions (institutional design) and the empirical analysis of these”. It is a micro approach by focus on the mini-public institutions. Nevertheless, although the deliberation system has only been highlighted in recent research, this view can be traced back to Mansbridge’s (1999) idea that ‘deliberation should be understood in a more inclusive lens’. Institutional deliberation did not focus on the systemic turn, while the latter indeed being mentioned in those previous generations (especially in the third generation). Hence, if the institutional deliberation and systemic deliberation can be divided into two separate generations still needs to be considered.

A genealogical approach provides democrats with a fresh perspective in mapping the sites and actors of policy processes by paying particular attention to the broader context of deliberative democracy. In the latest studies, a systemic approach seems on its way, as Mansbridge (2012) argues, in a deliberative system, all individual institution and process do not have to function simultaneously, they are mutually complemented. This ambition to integrate too many ingredients into one system, at least, in this stage, is still rather theoretical. That said, if such a deliberation system can deal with these emerging challenges like transnational deliberation still remained doubtful. Also, like any other system, how a deliberative system can readdress the core question of the ‘division of labor’ and its transmissions is a new research agenda. This part of the analysis will be reexamined in the third section of this chapter.

2.3.2 Deliberative Democracy and Democratic Deliberation

Deliberative democracy now constitutes the most active arena of political theory in its entirety (Dryzek, 2007), this enthusiasm has continued in the last three decades that manifested both in the theoretical constructions and empirical explorations. In the Anglo-American view, deliberative democracy is commonly claimed to be the only legitimized form of democracy, its legitimating features such as equality and liberty as well as reason-based communications and a pursuing on the common good indicate reasoning about the common good in contrast to incorporate the pursuit of self-interest in modern democracy (Mansbridge, 2007). So far, deliberation has contributed parts of a democracy and democratic deliberation can only happen, as Rosenberg (2007) stated, when it meets the

prior conditions and follow procedural standards for ensuring discussions are fully deliberative. The two concepts being entangled, enough attention should be paid, besides deliberative democracy, to what constitute democratic deliberation and the relationship between democratic deliberation and deliberative democracy.

2.3.2.1 Beyond Reason, Pluralism Legitimacy Resource in Democratic Deliberation

Deliberative democrats equate naturally democratic decision making with collective deliberation, which is regarded as democratically binding and as a form the basis of (at least partially) “collective intentions” (see also Gutmann and Thompson, 1998), in other words, democratic and legitimized outcomes that only emerge through collective process of deliberation involve a free and equal exchange among everyone who will be affected by them (Manin, 1987; Cohen, 1989, 1997). Those political yet practical proposals are somehow confined within the small-scale and mini-public deliberation due to practical reasons, problems of time, numbers and distance, for example. Since deliberative democracy firmly assumes the link between ‘reason’ and the ‘common good’ as the core criteria, other aspects such as rhetorics and emotions are usually marginalized in this tradition. Nevertheless, according to Mansbridge (2007), plural legitimization is the crux for further distinguishing the democratic deliberation with deliberative democracy.

To understand democratic deliberation better, it is important to compare it with deliberative democracy, as well as the two core normative standards of reason and common good. Mainstream studies consider that reason-based communication is empowering, while other scholars believe that ‘disempowerment’ dialogues (Walsh, 2003) are far more deliberative and even legitimacy¹⁹. There are still some deliberative democrats firmly holding on to this definition, while the ‘neo-pluralist’ legitimacy democratic deliberation and the ‘deliberative system’ all revisited this tradition with more inclusive communicative forms. Habermas and many others in this classic philosophical tradition privilege ‘reason’ based on citizen’s rationality (that others describe as skills, capacities, good manners, reasonableness, etc. see also Rosenberg, 2007). Typically, citizens differ in

¹⁹These disempowerment communicative forms are distinguished from deliberation if it is empowering and thus reaching ‘common understanding’.

deliberative capacities and skills, and no institutional arrangement can reduce these practical gaps, which remains unavailing for promoting democratic deliberation insofar.

In the Habermasian sense, communicative rationality constitutes the basic principle to deliberative democracy, as Susen (2018) states, in this container, it includes, *Verstand* (reason), *Verständigung* (communication), *Verstehen* (understanding), *Verständlichkeit* (intelligibility), and *Einverständnis* (agreement), these doctrines rest upon the empowering potential of communicative rationality of (deliberative) democracy. There are however certain dialogue practices that “privilege the expression of emotion” in contrast to reason (Mansbridge, 2007, see also the ‘everyday talk’ in Mansbridge, 1999). These reason-like dialogues are not designed to meet the classic philosophical requirements for legitimate democratic decision both in its aims and methods. But in many studies, they themselves involuntarily include those emotional expressions of ‘rational deliberation’, for instance, the ‘experimental group deliberation’ conducted by Rosenberg ed. (2007) and Karpowitz and Mendelberg (2014). In these experiments, rational discourses are rarely found in real group discussions, but rather some alternatives for further influencing and persuading others. These evidences consolidated a plural criteria (reason-like) in accessing deliberation.

Mansbridge (2012) also stated in her later paper, “that ‘reason-giving’ can include any statement that sincerely responds to the practical deliberation, ‘reason’ in this usage can include an emotional state” (see also Amelie, 1985). This means that the rational individual is practically nonexistent, emotional expression thus can compose part of speech, and emotional discourse intertwines inextricably with the rational discourse in deliberation, while reason always plays the major part in deliberation. Nevertheless, more evidence indicated that interaction with different communicative forms can be the best engageable way in deliberation among the other functions such as thinking and weighing those alternatives, feeling empathy, and then deciding. Hence, to this perspective, the democratic deliberation means deliberation that has mixed sources of legitimation through both good deliberation and fair aggregation of various of communicative forms.

Mendelberg and Karpowitz (2012) cited theorists who defined deliberation as “a rational process of weighing the available data” (see also Walzer, 1999) and include empathy to ‘reason’ that jointly prompted legitimacy decisions. Rosenberg (2007) also promotes this issue with his experiments. But it turns out that rational discourses are not necessarily the right metric for legitimacy with the experimental conclusions, for example, the tested group may come to coconscious without final binding decisions and outcomes. Very

recently, many authors focus on the legitimacy input, the quality of the deliberation (procedural legitimacy), as the sole source of legitimacy, and seldom do they touch the ground with a more realistic lens. As Mansbridge (2018) criticized, the “mutual respect,” “reciprocity,” and “open-mindedness”, as the strict criterion standard for measuring the legitimacy of deliberation, seems too crucial. In short, for the rather orthodox studies, a systemic approach or lavish inclusiveness may ultimately lead to unintended consequences, such as a very loosely defined deliberation. Narrow focus on the consent processes and individual site (reason-legitimacy) may also fail to explain the (trans)national or large-scale decision makings, for reasoned communication is only possible at small scale. These accessory values of the plural communicative forms that co-contribute to, but not replace reason, enhance the legitimacy of deliberative democracy.

Another key dimension of the ‘common good’, in its various understanding (common goal, common concern, and common ground) is an *end* to deliberation. While this *end* is not necessarily referring to the direct decision making (in rare cases, genuine consensus may emerge and direct decision-making may be made on spot), more likely, deliberation amongst participants helps them identify the main conflicts and some common good (as defined by the second generation, the final decisions are made calling for a vote). According to Goodin (2000), “however crucial that distinctly non-deliberative final show of hands may be in providing democratic legitimacy for the decision, it is the preceding discussion which renders that decision a democratically deliberative one”. That said, there is no consequent connection between civic ‘dialogue’ and legitimate democratic decision.

To go further, the ideal democratic theory stipulates that the outcomes of democratic deliberation should be impartial in the sense of giving equal concern to the interests and values of all people affected by them (Rummens, 2012), rather than seeking a ‘common ground’ beyond the conflicts and arguments among the deliberators with the ignorance of the self-reconciliation within those conflicts. A closer examination on the two core dimensions of ‘self-interest’ and ‘common ground’ in this classic definition is needed. Firstly, participants with different self-interests are more likely to identify some of the common ground rather than aim at or reach a consensus before and after deliberation; secondly, this process is more spontaneous-driven, and does not forcefully seek for the consensus (Mansbridge, 2007). This tradition was coined by List (2004) as ‘meta-agreement’; that is, deliberation is more important in underlining the process for approaching ‘consensus’ rather than consensus per se. Based on the different

understandings of the ‘common good’, then how does the common good connect with legitimacy? Respectively, aggregative and deliberative sources can both facilitate the decision-making legitimacy (Mansbridge, 2007). An aggregative method is aimed at the ‘citizens’ equal power in a regulative rule while sometimes without deliberation’; while a deliberative approach fills this void of how the ‘common good’ come into being. This process is identifying both the conflicts and common goods via various deliberative-like approach, bargaining (Elster, 1998), negotiating (Bächtiger, Spörndli, Steenbergen and Steiner, 2007), for example.

These expansions on ‘reason’ and ‘common good’ in deliberative democracy are mostly favored by Anglo-American authors like Mansbridge, Bohman, Chambers, Christiano and Fung. Such an approach revisited some orthodox dimensions both in the deliberative democracy and democratic deliberation, as well as some ideas that are considered opposed in a normative sense, aggregative procedures, for example. While this link with legitimacy takes the positive values from the very plural sources by admitting the coercive power, inequality, deliberative capacities in the real political practices. Nevertheless, this process still keeps the ideals of ‘reason’ and ‘common good’ in the central place. Also, concerning the ‘concept stretching’ that worried some deliberative democrats (see Steiner, 2008 and the later response of Austen-Smith and Feddersen, 2008), such a very careful expansion is recapturing the essential features of deliberation rather than a misuse of the concept and conceptualization.

2.3.2.2 Connections and Discrepancies between Deliberative Democracy and Democratic Deliberation

A rethinking of the authentication of democracy in the new era makes for the deliberative turn from voting to communication. From the very beginning, democrats like Dewey (1927), Manin (1987), Cohen (1989), Bohman and Rehg (1997), Elster (1998), had already conducted profound studies on this issue. Bessette (1980) first proposed the concept of deliberative democracy. By the late 1990s, this concept was respectively developed by John Rawls (1993) and Jürgen Habermas (1996), its main contributors. The very latest trends are captured by authors like Jane Mansbridge (2012), John Parkinson (2013), James Fishkin (2016) and Yves Sintomer (2018). Simply put, deliberative democracy theory is grounded on the idea of reasonable communications amongst free and equal individual, sorting out

and at best, reaching the common good. Defining it this way mostly retains deliberative democracy with some its basic ideas, and puts deliberation in the central place. Democrats distinguish deliberative democracy from some other democratic forms, for instance, the aggregative (voting), participatory and representative democracy. Such an idea is criticized for many reasons, nevertheless, the aspirational quality of deliberative ideals can never be underestimated.

Deliberative ideals have evolved over generations of scholarship, especially with the revisiting and reconsideration of the core elements of reason and the common good but some doctrines have remained unchallenged and unrevised, for example, respect, absence of power. Such genealogical analysis consistently brings some new ideas into deliberative democracy theory and constitutes the main features of the more inclusive democratic deliberation.

I prefer a ‘pluralism’ path to democratic deliberation (Mansbridge, 2007) given that it goes beyond both the Rawlsian liberal tradition and the Habermasian critical theory tradition. This approach comes from the critiques of the deliberative democracy theory. For instance, deliberative democracy is both normatively and empirically idealistic with the ignorance of the societal complexities and political power. These mainstream critics equate or, at least, resemble a deliberative dialogue with a political strategy, bargaining, compromise, speech, pure rhetoric things, etc. In this account, deliberation is a “discourse failure” (Pincione and Teson, 2006) with the citizens’ ignorance in politics. As Shapiro (1999) claims, the politics is far more deliberative than interests and power, in other words, the politics can be deliberative but not always.

But this pluralistic tradition, according to Bächtiger and Parkinson (2018), assesses the deliberative quality in ways relevant to the specific contexts without losing its core in reason-giving and reaching a consensus. As regards reason-giving, those rational discourses go further than ‘reason’ by considering some intertwining yet inextricable elements like emotion and rhetoric; as for the ‘common good’, it is revisited in the later deliberative generations through ‘sorting out some common ground’, like the meta-agreement (List, 2002), meta consensus (Dryzek and Niemeyer, 2006) and “working agreement” (Eriksen, 2009). Some other critiques of the exaggeration of deliberation in a representative system, demotivation of citizens’ participation and deliberation, lacking deliberative capacities, etc. can also be (partly) remedied by this pluralistic approach.

Loosely defining ‘deliberation’ by calling everything deliberation or by incorporating everything in a deliberative system is very problematic. When strictly defined, deliberation however enables a clear analytical meaning of deliberative democracy. That said, for example, when we utilize reason and other synonyms, it means how the other rational discourses cofunction in a deliberative process, and when we adopt the common good as well as some other aforementioned expressions, it refers to how the deliberation helps participants find a common ground and agree on a set of rules for reaching common ground after deliberation and making a decision. This path does not conflict with the first-generation definition of deliberative democracy, and the use of the pluralistic tradition can help better understand and fruitfully distinguish good deliberation from deliberation of poor quality.

3 Deliberative System

In the past few decades, enthusiasm for deliberative democracy has been devoted to seeking solutions to the defects in the first and second generations. Only recently have these efforts been presented in a systemic approach (Mansbridge, Bohman, Chambers, Christiano, Fung, Parkinson and Warren, 2012) with the pursuing of a more inclusive yet flexible deliberative system instead of focusing on individual sites. This very idea was introduced by Mansbridge (1999), and later defenders gave profound explanations and justifications on this formulation (e.g. Sunstein 2002; Parkinson, 2012; Karpowitz and Raphael, 2014; Dryzek, 2017). Amongst those interpretations, I elucidate two core issues, namely, what constitute to a deliberative system and if a systemic approach can be the panacea to the deficits of deliberative democracy.

3.1 Thinking About Deliberative Democracy Systemically

It is commonly recognized that most democracies are complex entities in which a wide variety of institutions, associations, and sites of contestation accomplish the political work...within which can be called a systemic approach to deliberative democracy²⁰. According to Mansbridge *et al* (2012), a systemic approach provides possibilities to rethink

²⁰Habermas (1996) suggested a systemic-like approach to deliberative democracy in his earlier writing, the ‘two-track’ deliberative system combined a relatively ‘wild’ sphere of deliberation among ‘weak’ publics with the more formal legislative deliberation. For a recent view, see Habermas (2006). *On Deliberative Systems*.

deliberative capacities beyond single (formal) deliberative institutions (see also Parkinson, 2011), and simultaneously, help depict a broader deliberative image in large-scale societal terms by including various communicative forms and adopting the ‘pluralist legitimacy resources’ (Mansbridge, 2007). Nevertheless, the challenges and critiques are also crucial. When distracting to pursue a large yet comprehensive deliberative system, it seems to erode the deliberativeness and quality of deliberation; and, as Owen and Smith (2015) doubt, encouraging or even searching for high deliberative quality in a specific forum may seem less important both normatively and analytically in a deliberative system.

3.1.1 Deliberative System as Designed

A deliberative system is one that encompasses a talk-based approach to political conflict and problem-solving through arguing, demonstrating, expressing, and persuading (Mansbridge *et al.*, 2012). Reaffirming of the deliberative system is more likely to emphasize the interactions, and the complementary roleplay among different parts in a dynamic whole, rather than focus on single deliberative forum with mere check and balance. In other words, a deliberative system involves some functional division of labour that co-functions and sometimes feasibly highlights some parts of a system. Deliberative experimentations conducted by many authors somehow put this assumption to the test, for instance, Parkinson’s (2006a) citizens’ juries, Fishkin’s (2000, 2005, 2010, 2011, 2018) deliberative Polling²¹. The empirical evidence integrates the scattered deliberative factors into a system, such as deliberative institutions design, participant (s)election, deliberative rule, while gauging deliberative weaknesses and strengths within the larger dynamic of groups and levels.

To capture the core dimensions of the deliberative system, first of all, it is the inclusiveness for fairly considering every institution and process. This allows the marginalized parts, for example, non-deliberative political activities and non-reason-giving (e.g. storytelling and rhetoric) to be taken into considerations. This perspective paves the way for the scale- and complexity-analysis of the deliberative system and the interactions between the various parts²². Nevertheless, we should be always careful that albeit both the ‘deliberative system’

²¹It is important to know that Fishkin also apply this deliberative systemic approach in authoritarianism like China

²²That said, according to Mansbridge *et al* (2012), parts of the deliberative system are self-complementary and -substitutive, within which the democratic deliberation benefit most from the flexible yet compatible parts of the system, in other words, make full use of the division of labor amongst those internal parts.

and ‘deliberative normative paradigms (the reason-giving and common good-oriented requirements)’ account for a good deliberation, the former may fail to ensure the inclusion of individuals in legislative deliberation, for example. To many, as Owen and Smith (2015) summarized, the systemic turn of deliberative democracy transits from the ideal of deliberation and the articulation of deliberative democracy (Habermas, 1996; Cohen, 1996; Gutmann and Thompson, 1996) to the ‘empirical turn’ (e.g. Fung, 2003; Steiner *et al.*, 2004; Grönlund *et al.*, 2014), and possibly integrates with the political system as a whole. In a nutshell, the systemic approach in deliberative democracy further expanded the previous understanding on both the connection between the parts of the deliberative system and the binding decision-making, as well as the isolated function of parts in the deliberative system.

A further revisit on the deliberative system is necessary to check if such an approach can facilitate the good deliberation and thus deliver the more democratic outcomes. To Mansbridge *et al* (2012), good deliberation and good deliberative system are interlinked, those classic requirements for good deliberation refer to the ‘inclusive, authentic and consequential deliberations amongst equal citizens in non-coercive settings.’ In a deliberative system, as Mansbridge *et al* (2012) indicated, “a systemic approach does not require that every component have a function be interdependent with every other such that a change in one will automatically bring about a change in all others...it is not necessary that the function be fulfilled optimally in one location, since in a deliberative system the same function may be distributed across various subsystems.” This flexible arrangement enables a good deliberative system to be self-correcting²³, nevertheless, despite the strong normative indications, large-scale deliberation favored by the deliberative system cannot deliver as good deliberative qualities as the mini-public deliberations aforementioned, given the legal exclusion of certain deliberative parts or the binding decision to the absent parts nevertheless without their direct deliberation.

But how democratic can a deliberative system be, and thus contribute to a more democratic understanding? A well-functioning democratic deliberative system promotes and facilitates the inclusion and equal opportunity to participate in a deliberative system (Goodin, 2007).

²³For supporters of a deliberative system, the systemic functions mainly refer to the multi-promotion between the deliberative system and good deliberation. Epistemically, deliberation and decision making can be appropriately informed by a broad array of deliberative parts in a deliberative system; such system ensures the mutual respect among citizens within non-coercive deliberation; also, the systemic inclusiveness makes deliberative processes democratic. Therefore, these three functions facilitate good deliberations to be achieved in a deliberative system.

This process provides equal opportunities of participation but not deliberation, given that different deliberative ideals still have to be fulfilled within the representative government, parliamentary or congressional system (Goodin, 2005), for example. Mansbridge *et al* (2012) explored the boundaries of a deliberative system in democracies (they refuse to make comments on the deliberative system in authoritarianism, except that “authoritarian regimes have deliberation, much deliberation goes on within the Catholic Church”). Some other theorists actively investigate what appropriate standards constitute a qualified deliberative system, and those practitioners are examining the systemic approach in various experimentations. Nevertheless, what worried many is not only that a systemic approach risks losing its normative moorings, but also that these defenders of a deliberative system say little of the interconnectedness among various deliberative venues, how they interlink, interact, complement and cofunction in this system. It never means that all the parts can be stacked together to form a system. These critiques prompt a rethinking on this (mainly normative) systemic idea for further contributing to a more solid democratic understanding.

3.1.2 Review of the Systemic Approach to Deliberative Democracy

Yet, as with the design of any other political system, the deliberative system has faced poignant criticisms since it was first proposed. It appeared to some that considering bringing individual deliberative sites together in a system embedded in the political system exaggerated the role played by deliberation, which was sometimes coined as the ‘discourse failure’ (Pincione and Tesón, 2006). This limitation echoed the very classic criticisms towards the first-generation ideals of deliberative democracy. Walzer (1999) stated that political deliberation has remained doubtful given that those political debates, speeches, claims are designed for political gains and voting, and they come with little deliberative exchanges. Albeit a deliberation system in a way expands the scope of various communicative expressions, this consideration still has to carefully rebalance the complexities in politics without losing its core in reason-giving and listening. This defect in deliberative system is also described as ‘decouple’ by Mansbridge *et al* (2012). She indicates the domination of one part over another, with the failure to address the coordinated development for large parts of a deliberative system. As Dryzek (2012) puts:

Deliberative thinkers have incorporated into their accounts elements of pluralism, disruption, agonism, rhetoric, enclave communication, and polyphonic interaction in broader public spaces. All this might look like there are few limits to the deliberative democratization of just about everything. But then the danger is if deliberative democracy is everything, maybe it is nothing. There have to be some things that deliberative democracy is not. Deliberative democracy is not command, deception, strategizing, coercive bargaining, play, poetry, violence, therapy, friendship, patronage, religion, private experience, or conformity with social norms and traditions. And even when it comes to new places where deliberative democracy might be taken, it is important to maintain a hard-critical edge that looks for subtle forms of domination and exclusion.

(Dryzek, 2012 p.207)

Another critique is that, too often, the analysis focuses on a single deliberative site, typically, deliberative institutions. It is so much easier to innovate piecemeal rather than changing the whole system, and empirical studies are so much more straightforward when one can exercise some control over conditions and gather data that is well bounded in time and place (Dryzek, 2016). For the large-scale or systemic deliberation, it needs integrating many parts of the deliberative system in societies, legislatures, administrative branches, experts, ordinary citizens. An individual institution and process may perfectly prove the authentic deliberation within, and nevertheless, may not be deliberative or democratic in its own right in a deliberative system. For example, citizens' juries may produce good deliberation within mini publics, while a broader decision-making may only take references of this deliberation. This domination in deliberative system can be presented institutionally, socially, ideologically and ethnically. This paradox is not that obvious in single settings, nevertheless, incorporating all the parts in a system may exacerbate this differentiation and polarization.

I would like to highlight two other dangers in a deliberative system. This has been mentioned in Ricardo Mendonça's (2016) paper "*Mitigating systemic dangers: the role of connectivity inducers in a deliberative system*" (he continued towards a deliberative democracy after Smith William with a critical lens) but rarely discussed. Firstly, assuming all parts in a deliberative system can be interconnected and complementary, the decision makers (human factor) still have the discretion concerning which bit or bits of public opinion to pay attention to. Does this mean that if a decision must be made following a deliberative system, then this outcome may be a selective decision making by a powerful decision maker? Secondly, following this logic, in the division of labor in a deliberative system, there are

naturally differences in function, power, and emphasis between parts. At best, they can be directly interconnected; nevertheless, what if the more powerful parts play a predominant (sometimes overwhelming) role? If so, a systemic deliberation is nothing different from a single deliberation.

In essence, not every democratic decision must be taken through deliberation and not every deliberative forum in a democracy must be inclusive and democratic, parliamentary debates, for example. In extreme cases, a deliberative and democratic system could function with some dysfunctioning part. According to Goodin (2008), deliberation is distributed to every parts of the deliberative system. This assumption may positively assume the effective coordination between different parts. In the blueprint of a deliberative system, ‘reasoning together’ through partial (or all) parts simultaneously in a reductionist approach (Owen and Smith, 2015) is unrealistic. That said, simply engaging too many parts in a deliberative system (mainly for various reason-like rhetoric), and making them interlinked, multi-complementary, legitimate may fail to address and justify how these parts are being democratically and legitimately incorporated in the deliberative system rather than functionally and instrumentally embedded.

More precisely, a systemic approach to deliberative democracy has little to say about the deviations or how counterproductive a deliberative system can be. It seems, among the latest discussions on the deliberative system, that defenders rather focus on how these non-deliberative or deliberative-like processes that account and constitute a deliberative system. It is very true that these reason-like dialogues and communications may produce the same *deliberative* effects and legitimized outcomes, and this may make sense separately. If they can achieve a ‘deliberative minimum’ (Fung, 2003) in a system, such incorporation, on the contrary, will erode the deliberative quality. This goes back to the fundamental critique of the systemic approach, namely, the paradox between mass deliberation in a deliberative system and ensuring a good deliberation.

It is still questionable whether a deliberative system can settle those prominent and persistent critiques towards deliberative democracy, such as the impact of inequality of wealth and status within deliberating process, the weakening of large-scale deliberation on authentic deliberation, etc. Also, as Thompson (2008) stated, the central question that remains unaddressed by the deliberative system approaches is how and in what way to integrate all those elements altogether. Those unanswered matters might be justified both from the substantive lens, for instance concrete deliberative institutions, another lens

might also be justified through reference to other values, such as freedom of speech, thus further distinguishing how we are going to reach decisions at specific points in the political system in order for the system itself to qualify as deliberative and democratic.

3.2 Institutionalization of Deliberative Democracy

The institutionalization of deliberation or deliberative democracy accounts for an empirical yet more concrete lens to the ideal deliberation. By taking various insights and conclusions from the theoretical and empirical work, those deliberative institutions are designed to examine and test the normative concept under the contemporary, non-discourse friendly conditions. In the case of deliberative democracy, it means such a concept can find its way into the actual practice of real democracy through various concrete ways. The enthusiasm of practitioners for institutionalized deliberation and deliberative institutions can best manifest the practical value of the deliberative democracy. For instance, institutionalized deliberation prescribed in Habermas' political deliberation is highly designed like legislative deliberation in parliaments. As regards public deliberation, those efforts also paid to illustrate what institutionalization so defined means in the practice. Therefore, in this part, I narrow my focus on these deliberative institutions as well as their institutionalizations. This analysis can be carried out within a deliberative system or through an analytical comparison.

So far, deliberative democracy still remains a strong normative tradition, especially its critiques to representative democracy. Interactions based on reason and dialogue are definitely facilitating democratic inclusion, but it still seems unrealistic or insufficient (Dryzek, 2010) to transit these expectations into the real practices. Commonly, this deliberative empowerment of the public consolidates the legitimacy of the policy making process, but these practices do not necessarily happen or if they do, are limited in the institutions. Against this background, institutionalized deliberation accounts for the main discussions of deliberative democracy. These deliberative institutions are structured for social interactions that followed by customs or rules (Neill, 2013), furthermore, aggregating those dispersive speeches and communicative forms in an institutional design facilitates conversational exchanges, privileges the rights of citizens, and promotes social stability.

In this part I will not discuss specific institutions, given that a narrow attention on individual institution could have us run the risk of ignoring the generalities of the

institutionalization of deliberation. The very rich literature on deliberative institutions in different hierarchies, realms, venue, for instance, tells us that constitutional convention, citizen jury, deliberative polling, secondary associations, etc., are more likely being adopted as tools for innovating democratic policy-making processes and further indicates that an institutional approach may function for facilitating authentic deliberation. Still, those deliberative democrats are somehow perplexed on the transformation of the normative ideals to the institutional practice.

Motivated by ‘a surprising lack of empirical case studies of democratic deliberation’ (Bohman, 1998) and well-aware of the difficulties of implementing normative ideals, theoreticians of deliberative democracy have also become institutional designers, promoters and practitioners of various democratic experiments (Dryzek, 2010). This institutional turn has been mainly designed for the linking of citizens and elites in a deliberative system, described as ‘coupling’ by Hendriks (2016). More directly, institutional deliberation has brought back a more precise division of labor within a deliberative system; that is, what the role of the deliberative institutions should play. In other words, how to design deliberative institutions rendering citizens closer to the empowered (decision-making) sites (Owen and Smith, 2015). For this sake, a well-functioning deliberative institution should, firstly, actively entails wide public participation in a deliberative system, even though these efforts sometimes fail due to the exclusiveness of elite decision-making²⁴. Secondly, those multiple deliberative institutions should interconnect through institutional mechanisms, which means that “each part would consider reasons and proposals generated in other parts” (Mansbridge *et al.*, 2012).

If we accept the imperfections in the transition from (deliberative) norms to practice, and if we accept that this process is mainly achieved through institutional approaches²⁵, then a

²⁴Recent scholarships on the reconsideration over an institutional turn of deliberative democracy take those defects seriously. For instance, some authors did admit that deliberative interactions exist within the institutions, such as the parliament, the classic venue for deliberation (Bessette, 1980; Holzinger, 2005). But parliamentary debates are a series of monologues rather than a dialogue (Landwehr, 2010). This paradox can be found in almost every deliberative institution, namely, with the hope for further adjustment of deliberation via an institutional approach but failing to make deliberation more inclusive insofar.

²⁵Some authors propose a non-institutionalized sometimes anarchic public sphere beyond institutional forms, for example, social movements and protests. As Young (2003) stated, “it may well be wiser for protest movements to remain entirely outside the corridors of power than to allow themselves to be absorbed into forums of the institutionalized deliberation.” This idea gave leeway for non-institutional deliberation. Landwehr (2015) however disagrees with this idea, claiming that these conflict-based approaches do not entail any positive recommendations for deliberative institutional design. I favor those non-institutional deliberations; they nevertheless only play a role when the institutional deliberation fails or disfunction. This complementary part remedies the institutional defects within deliberative institutions.

more empirical and urgent consideration is the aforementioned two-dimensional analysis, namely, how to design deliberative institutions so as to maximize their representativity and deliberativeness in a rather fair participation and how to reconcile such institutions into a deliberative system. These two considerations are interconnected. According to Landwehr (2015), institutional designs have to fulfil its role in order to be qualified as deliberative and democratic. This is unachievable in a deliberative system, as such a system needs both the deliberative and non-deliberative institutions to further fulfill the ‘complementary relation’, as Mansbridge (2012) stated that:

The group-thinking predominate in the nation-state level when some public issue is driven by nationalism or xenophobia, some good reasons arising from one part fail to penetrate the others.

(Mansbridge *et al.*, 2012 p32).

This justification explicitly indicates that not every democratic decision must be taken through deliberation and not every deliberative forum in a democracy must be inclusive and democratic. One has to note that this is not a dissociation of deliberation and democracy (though they are not naturally interlinked). Conversely, such an approach renders a deliberative system perplexingly easy to reach, and thus paves the way for the next consideration of the interactions between the different forms of institutional design (Smith, 2003). Any kind of design should offer some minimum procedural guarantees for public participation and linkages to the final decision-making in a deliberative system. Especially since the representative government predominates the modern governmental forms in democracies, democratizing institutional design and ensuring its accountability for both direct voters and beyond can enhance the democratic qualities of the system as whole.

4 Participatory Democracy and Deliberative Democracy

These two entangled traditions of participatory democracy and deliberative democracy constitute the most important venue in modern democratic theories. The participatory conception of democracy prevailed in the 1960s, with the proposal of direct participation in politics, especially some important representative institutions. In 1980s, deliberative democracy came into view and reason-based communication has seemed to become the prerequisite for democratic and legitimized decision making from then on. These two democratic discourses are both answering some core deficits in democracy. Their

relationship remains nevertheless blurred, especially their focus and boundaries. Contemporary democracy studies seem more in favor of a deliberative approach, especially, for some of the radical deliberative democrats. Mark Warren and James Bohman, for example, repeatedly emphasized the incompatibilities between the two democratic ideas, sometimes with disregard for the direct participation and democracy. Pateman, as well as some other participatory democracy supporters, argue that participatory democracy is important in contemporary representative systems despite the criticism. Against this background, and while revisiting participatory democracy, it is important to further reconcile participatory and deliberative democracy in democratic theory with their intersections and compatibilities and identify how they can be conjointly beneficial for further enhancing a more vibrant democracy.

4.1 Participatory Democracy Revisited

Participatory democracy was first proposed in the Port Huron Statement of “students for a democratic society” in 1962 (Mansbridge, 1983; Florida, 2014). The idea ran against the exclusion of citizens who were said to be incapable to participate in politics in the orthodox democratic theories (Pateman, 1970; Barber, 1984). During the 1980s, ‘participation’ began to become mainstream in political studies, calling for direct citizens’ participation in some key institutions (Held, 1996) rather than only engaging representatives (e.g. elite democracy, see Schumpeter, 1942, see also Cohen, 2009). Participatory democracy provides “more decisional capacity to those who are more committed, and therefore participate more” (Barber, 1984; Porta, 2013). The more flourishing deliberative conception of democracy draws modest conclusions from the premises of participatory democracy. It seems that the appeal of participatory democracy has declined after the 1990s with the emerging of deliberative-style democracy, and for the most part, deliberative democrats have shown little interest on the old-fashion participatory idea. These two conceptions can always be considered as different answers and approaches to democracy, and Thompson (2008) once put that, “the turn toward deliberative theory has not displaced participatory theory.”

The idea of citizens’ participation in politics derived from the unavailable opportunities caused by socio-economic inequalities. That said, the public should be provided with more opportunities and venues to participate in collective decision-making instead of the ‘counting of votes’. There were ambiguities on the concept of *participation* at this stage; that

is, how to interlink the ‘full’ participation with the equal decision-making power given to all (Pateman, 1970). Participatory democracy differentiates itself from the mass and direct (merely) participation, which means that equal participatory opportunities should be redistributed to the powerless (Arnstein, 1969). This approach is theoretically helpful for the public’s self-definition of citizenship and autonomy through participating in collective decisions that affect them. Participation in this sense can reduce the socio-economic inequalities, thereby promoting political equality and consequently facilitating a more substantive democracy (Elstub, 2018; see also Macpherson, 1977). It seems that participatory politics (co-governance) can be the best venue for practicing the ‘rule of people’, so why did the participatory concept of democracy lose its appeal in the modern political view?

Poignant critiques of participatory democracy (some from deliberative democrats) express that the participatory idea tends to simplify societal complexity in democracy. Calling for *more participation* in major social institutions is unrealistic and sometimes counterproductive (Hauptmann, 2001; see also Parry and George’s discussion ‘more participation, more democracy’). For participatory democrats, the legacies of the ancient model of citizenship (e.g. Rousseau’s thinking of the people’s rule should be practiced by direct participation rather than through representation) are inherent, while modern representative institutions seem to discourage this participation idea. Therefore, there remains the paradox of participatory theories tending to disregard the division of labor (see Schumpeter 1952, elite decision-making) by proposing a general participation, while in practice, as Warren (1996) puts, “individuals are likely to find decisions making so burdensome and inefficient...make decisions based on authorities they derive from a participatory process.” This means the participatory concept of democracy is empirically awkward.

There may have a superficial link between participation, the practice of people’s rule and democracy in participatory democracy. For the most important element of ‘people’, those tensions lie in the question whether such participatory context can seduce and motivate public engagement. To Warren (1996), the very idea that many people might be attracted by participation is “romantic dogma”, and this ideal expects too much on the individuals’ knowledge and enthusiasm. Nevertheless, Pateman (2012) argues, with her empirical evidence (mini-public participation and deliberation), “the citizens both welcome and enjoy the opportunity to take part and to deliberate, and that they take their duties seriously...are quite capable of understanding the complex, and sometimes technical,

issues and reaching pertinent conclusion about significant public matters.” Also, in her book *Participation and Democratic Theory*, she further justified participatory democracy, and showed with her examples of participatory budgets that it is not just an ideal and that it is feasible. Nonetheless, she (also see Yves Sintomer’s observations on the participatory budgets in Europe) also admitted that such practices fall far short of the ideal of participatory democracy due to superficial participation.

Participatory democracy necessarily inherits the legacies of ‘direct democracy’ while it functions within the modern representative system. It creates a new sphere of discussion and political deliberation that eliminates or at least reduces the problems of legitimacy raised by representative institutions (Vitale, 2006). That said, the idea of participation in politics is not merely an independent aggregation of individual ideas (Rousseau, 1989). In the Habermasian sense, participatory dimensions should be exercised through public deliberation. This has also been confirmed by those later democrats who deal with participation as an intersubjective concept (Pateman, 1970; Macpherson, 1978). For Pateman, “the theory of participatory democracy is built around the central assertion that individuals and their institutions cannot be merely considered in isolation from one another”. Which means the interaction between and among individuals and institutions can ultimately enhance the legitimized outcomes after the collective decision-making process.

Pateman left a question open: participatory democracy is possible and achievable both theoretically and practically, but it depends firmly on the political culture and will to pursue genuine democracy. Nevertheless, this vision does not take into account of post-development states (authoritarian regimes, for example, even if the public participation is symbolically designed). In her work, she pinned this hope on rich countries, albeit she simultaneously mentioned the interactions of participation with some other democratic forms (e.g. deliberative democracy). But she did not delve more. This trend was captured by later deliberative democrats. To sum up, in nowadays political discussion, participatory democracy can only refunction with the incorporation of deliberative democracy in a representative system. Such claims do not downplay and distance the participatory theorists of democracy from modern democratic studies. Conversely, in the deliberative conception of democracy, a participatory value and idea is preciously reorganized, especially in the very latest deliberative generations. How these two concepts are entangled and the role they play in democratic theory still need to be clarified.

4.2 From Participatory to Deliberative Democracy

The two democratic discourses of participatory and deliberative democracy always intertwined in contemporary democratic theory. The great change since 1960s when participatory democracy enjoyed a prominent place in political theory, is that by 2007, John Dryzek could write that “deliberative democracy now constitutes the most active area of political theory in its entirety (not just democratic theory) (see also Pateman, 2012).” The revised democratic attention from a participatory yet collective decision making to a ‘talk-centered’ model indicates a vigorous democratic theory revival. Among the many arguments, authors within different camps respectively connect the two discourses in democracy. For instance, participatory and deliberative democracy are indistinguishable (Coppedge and Gerring *et al.*, 2011), incompatible (Warren, 1996a; Mutz, 2006; Pateman, 2012) and agnostic (Fishkin, 2009). While the mainstream tends to regard the deliberative democracy theory as a continuation of participatory democracy (Bohman, 1996; Vitale, 2006; Porta, 2013) and suffer from the same flaws (Hardin, 2009), a participatory idea is a departure from deliberative democracy (Hauptmann, 2001; Goodin, 2012; Pateman, 2012; Florida, 2014). Some argue that they are mutually supportive (Vitale, 2006; Cohen, 2009; Porta, 2013; Davidson and Elstub, 2014). It remains important for further looking into the relations of the two democratic discourses.

As mentioned above, participatory democracy calls for an extension of participation in politics and reducing social and economic inequalities. A participatory idea in this sense is the exercise of sovereignty in the discursive processes of collective will-formation (Vitale, 2006). The collective decision-making or consensus on this basis usually ends by voting. If so, what is the difference between participatory democracy and ‘vote-centered’ democracy? Such consensus, as well as the public participation can only make sense when reason-based dialogues occur amongst participants. A participatory idea may ensure equal participation, nevertheless, it cannot guarantee the equal opportunity to *talk*. Even participatory democrats, Pateman (2012), for example, acknowledge that deliberation constitutes a crucial element for all forms of democracy, including the participatory variant. Nevertheless, they sometimes fail to guarantee these processes through legal institutionalization.

When placing the public participation in a representative system, decisions by minorities and full public participation are not always contradictory, if decision making is based on

the authority they derive from a participatory process (Warren, 1996a). While the social complexity and scale problem make this process even more window-dressing. Hence, some radical deliberative democrats argue that deliberative qualities and the expansion of participation are irreconcilable in this sense (Thompson, 2008; Steiner 2012). There are also critics from the other side, some democrats, like Hauptmann (2001), states that, modern democratic theory is correct on the critique of participatory democracy, but such critics, especially from deliberative democrats, are taking the social complexity and deliberative idea too seriously. There is a loss of a critical edge with the deliberative turn in deliberative democracy.

In fact, the subtle distinction of participation from deliberation is not that easy. To many, the deliberative idea is consistent with the participatory democracy, Bohman (2000) even concluded in his book of *Public deliberation: Pluralism, complexity, and democracy* that the deliberative approach is a view of ‘participatory democracy’. In this sense, a ‘deliberative’ form would enhance both the normative and explanatory potential of participatory democracy (Elstub, 2018). Nevertheless, if participatory democrats claim that public participation accounts for *authentic* democracy, they have to further confront some poignant questions like how participatory opportunities enhance civic virtue (Grönlund *et al.*, 2010) and how to distinguish between authentic views and manipulated ones (Elstub, 2018). Deliberative democrats believe that ‘a deliberative process with multi-justifications and leaning’ (Barber, 2014) can fill this void and thus make both participation and deliberation more authentic. On this basis, democracy will be further strengthened by a ‘participatory deliberative democracy’ approach (Cini, 2011; Elstub, 2018). This approach ensures, firstly, the equal political weight and engagement in decision making through public participation (political equality); secondly, a deliberative method fulfills the ideal participatory democracy with reason-based dialogues and deliberative communications amongst the participants, which enhances the legitimacy of decision-making and *authentic* democracy.

Mainstream studies remain carefully checking-and-balancing of the two main sources for liberal democracy, despite with many criticisms, most theorists assume a firm connection of the two. While there are some dissents, especially for the radical deliberative democrats, like Fishkin and Bessette, for example, who treat participation and deliberation as two opposite ideas, this voice highlights the tensions between the two camps. For example, mini-public deliberation cannot be achieved by unregulated participation. This is very true,

but a reconciling method seems more convincing for a democratic study. Deliberative democrats should then embrace more strongly some of the key ideas of participatory democracy rather than reject it altogether.

4.3 Reconciling Participatory Democracy and Deliberative Democracy

The critiques of liberal democracy and the revival of participatory and deliberative democracy both make room for a better understanding of how a legitimacy and democratic decision making should and could be made. In participatory theory, a distinctive feature of its understanding of democracy is the dimension of direct empowerment; namely, individual equality of power that participates in decision making amounts to everything. The political “populist” phenomenon and the idea that “citizens must be able to decide” are all inherent traits of this tradition. The mainstream idea of participation underplays the complexities of real political practice and the paradox between the deliberative quality and participatory scale (Thompson, 2008; Steiner, 2012).

Here again, a deliberative conception of democracy advocates for the interactions, reason justifications and learnings through a communicative process amongst participants. The aforementioned analyses elucidated some divergences and commonalities between participatory democracy and deliberative democracy. Being two different approaches to democracy, they all point to a crisis of legitimacy in the decision-making process and direct attention to the conditions of democratic exercise (Habermas, 1979), and answer core questions like how decision making can be made more legitimate and democratic. Rather than antagonizing the two, the way for example some radical democrats (e.g. Fishkin, 2009) consider deliberative democracy is something that transcends participating democracy, I prefer to find the intersections between the two democratic discourses and further reconcile them in democratic theory.

The participatory enterprise, despite its marginalizing of social complexity, still takes consideration of deliberation as its solution. Rather than distancing deliberation from participation, it is important to reestablish the interconnections between the two. Firstly, their joint efforts to boost legitimacy; as Vitale (2006) puts, “the participatory ideal cardinally traces the legitimacy deficit to the distance between the latent potential for

participation and the lack of institutional sluices that can serve as a stage for broader public deliberations.” The Habermasian concept of deliberative democracy from a procedural dimension indicates that legitimized decision-making depends on public reflective communication. For this sake, a ‘participatory deliberative’ model takes into consideration the legitimacy crisis on both sides and reconciles them in representative governance. Participatory democracy emphasizes direct participation (demo) in the representative system²⁶. This participation creates a new sphere for public participation that can solve some legitimacy problems raised by representative institutions (Vitale, 2006). This practical perspective acknowledges that the representative mechanism is fundamental in the Western democracies, and compatible with both participation and deliberation²⁷.

Besides the legitimacy impetus, in the real political world, there already are ongoing massive participatory and deliberative experiments, from mini-publics to large-scale ones in different political contexts. These participatory models and devices seek to “experiment” with the deliberative ideal that has come into vogue and been practiced. These experimentations refer to a complex correspondence; namely, effective participation with high-quality deliberation can lead to legitimized decision-making and vice versa. For instance, citizens may be amenable to participate in deliberation, but it may only be possible in homogeneous groups, and in some cases, participation is motivated by political passion that is reduced through deliberation. Evidently, different cases can be adopted to prove the subtle relationship between participation and deliberation, and in what forms the two are represented in real political life.

If we assume ‘a systemic turn’ of deliberative democracy is the latest trend in democratic studies, this paradoxical relation can be reconciled in such a system. To many, in their

²⁶Participatory democrats favour the direct participation and advocate citizen participation as the principal political practice. This idea is criticized both in for normative and practical reasons as utopian. While to note, a ‘direct participation’ is still important for practicing people’s sovereignty. Nevertheless, this ideal of participation is not a Rousseauian one, it needs interactions amongst the participants and to function within the representative system.

²⁷Some authors, Habermas (1990), for example, argues that direct participation (democracy) is problematic, while the democratic legalization should be grounded on procedural communication. Cohen (1997) also distinguishes public deliberation from direct democracy and gives the former a priority on political legitimacy. The defenders of deliberative democracy regard rational deliberation as the core source of legitimacy. Without this procedural prerequisite, decision making in representative democracy is easily manipulated. Nevertheless, this tradition has definitely inherited the participatory legacies; that is, participatory democracy provides a strong concern for the distribution of power and political equality. Beyond this debate, advisable solutions may highlight the compatibility of the two sides to further facilitate a more democratic envision.

empirical and qualitative studies²⁸, it is difficult for group deliberations (e.g. Hibbing and Theiss-Morse, 2002; Ryfe, 2006) to function, for example, for participation and deliberation to function simultaneously. But as a deliberative system indicates, the individual site is functioned respectively and conditionally. That said, mini-public meetings can guarantee authentic deliberation, while a large-scale participation may be less deliberative as a whole. Such analysis takes the practical dilemma very seriously (the incompatibilities between participation and deliberation, especially simultaneously), but gives a feasible answer to reconcile the two in a deliberative system. As such, this method can also confront the legitimacy crisis aforementioned in the democratic decision making.

In Elstub's (2018) conclusive conclusion, "participation is beneficial, but not essential, to the realization of deliberative norms, helping secure assent from all and the inclusion of all reasons. Similarly, deliberation is beneficial, but not essential, to the realization of the participatory norms, helping to educate citizens and combat inequality, while giving participatory democracy a more coherent focus". On this very issue, deliberative and participatory theories should not be understood as exclusive terms, despite their distinctive differences. Coalitional politics should be on the agenda as Dewey (1991) argued. Mutual critiques have illuminated shortcomings and limitations in these respective theories. There may be a shift of attention for considering about participatory and deliberative democracy with a rethinking both on the theoretical reconstruction and practical reexamination. These two models can function in different domains despite the overlap. Integrating the two in a seemingly more feasible approach in practice rather than a merely abstract thought may be the main focus of democrats.

5 Conclusion

The past four decades have witnessed the prosperity of deliberative democracy, this talk-based and sometimes radical democratic discourse has seemingly gained predominance in contemporary democratic studies. Since it was first proposed by American philosopher

²⁸These observations are uneven on their focus, and thus lead to quite different conclusions. For instance, Mansbridge (1983) indicated that people find it difficult to be engaged in deliberation, while Steiner (2012) gave a positive answer on people's participation in deliberation through a data study. All these efforts contribute to a better understanding on the entwisted relationship between participation and deliberation. Nevertheless, to be positively convinced with these studies, there are many prerequisites to be met. As Elstub (2018) indicates, we "found vastly more evidence in favour of the deliberative thesis—that is, that people would participate more if they thought that the system were less [as opposed to more] corrupt." Also, willingness to participation and deliberation varies in different political context, few studies have paid attention to how participation and deliberation function in the non-democracy political sphere.

Joseph M. Bessette in 1980, the idea of democracy it embodies in the American institutional mechanisms has been viewed as an opposition to direct democracy (as proposed of participatory democracy in the 1960s) and elite decision making (in representative government). To date, in its later evolution, many democrats, philosophers, legalists and sociologists enriched its meaning. For instance, Manin (1985), in his fundamental French version essay of *On Legitimacy and Political Deliberation* put that “the foundation of democratic legitimacy is not the general will, but the deliberation of all,” which claimed that the legitimacy of decision making comes from deliberative process rather aggregative consensus. Against this background, this chapter revisited some core dimensions in deliberative democracy studies, for further deepening and justifying how a deliberative approach contributes to the more vibrant democracy.

A genealogical analysis on deliberative democracy is both theoretically and empirically helpful for capturing the very latest foci in each generation. Roughly, there are three generations²⁹. The normative reconstruction of the concept by John Rawls, Jürgen Habermas, Bernard Manin, Joshua Cohen and John Dryzek in the first generation; rethinking of democratic inclusion and plurality in the second generation (e.g. studying of deliberative institutions) by James Bohman, Amy Gutmann, Dennis Thompson, Monique Deveaux, Iris Young and Lynn Sanders; a systemic turn of deliberative democracy in the third generation by Jane Mansbridge, Walter Baber, Ian O’Flynn, John Parkinson, James Fishkin, Archon Fung, John Gastil and Leonardo Avritzer. This mapping highlights several core challenges, very typically, the legitimacy problem. If we accept deliberation as being a procedural and reason-based communication in democracy, then, there remains a paradox and legitimacy crisis between and among legitimate outcomes coming from the authentic deliberation and large-scale deliberation, since the scale problem most likely makes illegitimate decision for those who left behind. Hence, seeking the legitimized decision making in the large-scale deliberation remains urgent. While a deliberative system design (Mansbridge, 1999) seems fit this void.

The *manifesto* of a ‘systemic turn’ of deliberative democracy (proposed by Jane Mansbridge, James Bohman, Simone Chambers, Thomas Christiano, Archon Fung, John Parkinson, Dennis Thompson, and Mark Warren, the main idea in the third generation), considers the deliberative characteristics of the political system as a whole. Simultaneously, the individual

²⁹Albeit Elstub, Ercan and Mendonça (2016) argue for a ‘fourth generation’ of deliberative democracy, but such an idea needs to be more convincing and how a fourth one is distinct from its ‘systemic turn’ predecessor better justified.

role and site can be examined respectively in such a deliberative system. Contributions of a systemic design are, firstly, that it takes (non)reason-based discourses like emotion, rhetoric, storytelling and testimony into more *generous* consideration. This new way of thinking consolidated a more practical meaning of deliberative democracy. Secondly, a deliberative system gives a full role to the individual site as well as their institutional complementarity. Nevertheless, a deliberative system should be careful dealing with the ‘concept stretching’ and ‘criteria weakening’.

The last foci are the revisiting of the connection between deliberation democracy and some other entangled synonyms, for instance, democratic deliberation and participatory democracy. The form of democratic deliberation adopts a ‘pluralist tradition’ with its extensive explanation on the core dimensions of reason, common good and legitimacy in deliberative democracy. This new attention to the expression of self-interest and legitimating aggregative procedures is enriching a systemic deliberation thinking without losing its normative pursuit. Another takeaway of the justification on the entangled relation between participatory democracy and deliberative democracy takes a syncretic analysis, rather than agnostic the two due to its different focus, tradition and democratic pursue. It is always wiser to reconcile the two in the democratic blueprint for further seeking a more vibrant democracy.

If one still criticizes deliberative democracy as unrealistic utopia due to its limited practical viability, he may simply ignore or marginalize the many and diverse deliberative innovations that have already been successfully implemented in the real world. If so, we may better think how to enhance the deliberativeness of the various communications in democratic settings, rather than focus on counting votes. In this sense, democracy must be deliberative. If we generously embrace plural (more or less deliberative) communicative forms in both political decision and everyday life rather than elite discussion, then this deliberative concept of democracy is accessible for all. In this deliberative tradition, many orthodoxies in democracy have been reexamined, the power, coercion, self-interest, common good, etc. Also, the relationships between and among deliberative democracy and many others like participatory democracy, representative democracy and democratic deliberation are also adopted as a more syncretic way for analyzing. So far, deliberative democracy receives as many critics as it is praised, but it is also these heckles that help such an idea evolve into a time-tested theory.

Chapter Two: Western Perspectives on China: Authoritarian Deliberation and Authoritarian Consultation

1 Introduction

Western political theories have been dominant a long-lasting influence, and emerging nonorthodox political evidence has been constantly marginalized. This equilibrium is now challenged by some late-comers, a rising China, for example. My thesis notwithstanding focuses on indigenized political study in contemporary China, nevertheless, this analysis is conducted in a comparative framework. Such comparison can not only provide a fresh non-Western-centric insight into China's politics, it can also go beyond a 'democracy *vs* authoritarianism/non-democracy' dichotomy. Unfortunately, there are still some Western authors who reject nascent (quasi)-democracy-like phenomena in authoritarianism. China can boast a 5000-year-old civilization, the Chinese political discipline has nevertheless only been established in the 1980s. In this sense, a combination of Chinese political studies with a comparative study provides a very rich perspective for both China and the West. Such an approach also fills the void for a comprehensive understanding of Chinese politics with the official propaganda of '*Chinese characteristics* (*zhongguo te'se* 中国特色)'.

Over the last few decades, when the prophecies of the 'collapse of China's authoritarian regime' were finally understood to be self-defeating, study on authoritarian resilience was put on the agenda. Nathan (2017) developed this idea of 'authoritarian resilience' regarding the CCP's institutionalization as antidote for maintaining China's authoritarian regime survival, within which, limited participation and deliberation are considered to function (at least partially). This idea was later revisited by Fewsmith and Nathan (2019) via extending the edge and scope of the institutionalization and by revealing the more brutal political struggle within the party. They somehow indicated the fragile and persistence of this authoritarian equilibrium. Other similar analyses, such as the regime inclusiveness (Yan, 2011; Chien, 2016), adaptive politics (Chai and Song, 2013), the responsiveness of Chinese authoritarianism (Lee and Zhang, 2013; Chen, Pan, and Xu, 2016), good governance (Dethier, (Ed.), 2000; Zhang, 2006; Li, and Naughton, 2007; Deng, (Ed.), 2011) in

contemporary China, have therefore proliferated. Against this background, predictions on China's future have also raged in the last few decades, for instance, the authoritarianism enlightening (Cabestan, 2004, 2015) and declining (Ding, 2006; Wang and You, 2016) in the foreseeable future. All those analyses contribute to a comprehensive understanding on Chinese authoritarianism and political reforms.

This chapter investigates the analysis of Chinese deliberative democracy in the Western Chinese research agenda. It is very true that some Western authors have begun to abandon a simple authoritarianism and democracy dichotomy by shifting their focus to some seemingly paradoxical nevertheless democratic developments in Chinese authoritarianism. Nonetheless, these efforts are far from enough, given the ideological hostility and the fear caused by China's rising. Some radical critics consider that Chinese academic outcomes are pseudoscience as they are following the official propaganda and lacking academic freedom. This antagonistic relation should be eased in a comparative political study. For this purpose, I therefore have the ambitions to bridge the Chinese-Western political studies by firstly reexamining Western studies of authoritarian deliberation and authoritarian consultation.

To begin with, I revisit China's authoritarianism and its resilience as well as the visions of China's political future. There are commonly two main factions mentioned in Western studies. Firstly, romantic optimists respectively led by Professor He and Warren (2011), who are full of expectations about China's political future based on the long-term observations of grassroots democratic experimentations. He Baogang believes deliberation and authoritarianism can be reconciled in China's current political settings. Subsequently, a group of followers defended this idea from a multi-dimensional perspective with fruitful outcomes. This chapter will also reexamine this idea within the seemingly more centralized context in Xi's era. Secondly, I will focus on the formulation of authoritarian consultation based on Professor Rory's (2017) latest elaborations. This idea argues that the so-called *deliberative* experiments in China are merely consultative-oriented and far more deliberative designed in nature, especially in the regime-level political interactions.

This link between China's authoritarianism and consultation/deliberation is frequently highlighted in Western Chinese studies. In this analysis, consultation and deliberation are adopted for further consolidating Chinese authoritarianism, it is not a democratic means of public empowerment. This is probably true. Nevertheless, it fails to take a fair appraisal on China's internal discussion, especially with distance from the official propaganda-very

typically, a ‘consultative democracy’ discourse. In any case, this critical lens constitutes a more comprehensive understanding on China’s political changes from an outsider’s view.

These studies go further on the ‘authoritarianism perpetuation’ while looking into how a consultation and deliberation method functions in China’s authoritarian resilience. Such contributions are being institutionalized in China’s political settings both at the central and local level. This embedding seems more and more stable despite the CCP’s monopoly. Following these clues, in this chapter, I firstly revisit the main contributions of Western Chinese studies³⁰, then, some reflections are made based on a further analysis of such ideas. This includes a critical reappraisal of the relationship and interaction between and among Chinese authoritarianism, consultation and deliberation, also, with further assumptions on how this authoritarian consultation and deliberation can evolve in the future.

2 Chinese Authoritarianism and Its Resilience

The critique of China’s authoritarian politics is nothing new, and it has constantly rumbled with diverse inferences, typically, the collapse of the CCP, for example. For decades, these conjectures have never been confirmed. It may have disappointed some democracy advocates. But, conversely, this unusual occurrence motivated academics to dig into the incentives and reasons for the perpetuation of authoritarian rule. My analysis of the Western views on China’s deliberative democracy coined deliberative authoritarianism /authoritarian deliberation and consultative authoritarianism/authoritarian consultation, is therefore all based on the authoritarian continuation in contemporary China. On the first hand, authoritarian resilience and inclusion pave the way for further looking into the symbiosis of the entwisted relationship between authoritarianism and consultation /deliberation. Moreover, those very formulations proposed by Western authors with case studies and observations also confirm the status quo and critique of Chinese political reform in different domains, thus reflecting on China’s current deliberative politics. In the following chapter, different perspectives will be given to analyze whether these case studies are reliable or promotional.

³⁰A broad understanding on the Western Chinese studies and Western scholars should be adopted, it is generally referring to those scholars who working in foreign universities or research institutions, including both foreigners and Chinese that with the Western way of thinking, these views of scholars from Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macau are also being cited and referenced.

2.1 Chinese Political Authoritarianism

Traditional political science prefers *transition theory* to analyze China's democratic prospects, or, to analyze China's political liberalization by focusing on elections or other facets of democratization. These analyses at best partially explain the continuation of China's authoritarianism, and they mostly fail to analyze in depth how this authoritarianism keeps changing and evolving and is still present in a *stable* form; hence, providing social and economic benefits in a complex international and domestic environment. Rather than being limited to some narrow views, a broader reflection of Chinese authoritarianism and predictions with so-called conclusions more likely based on the short-term political reform and insight, I myself prefer to find answers rather than draw conclusions about the changing politics in China.

2.1.1 China's Authoritarian Rule

Contemporary scholarship on dictatorships has so far generated only a rather fragmented understanding of the authoritarian politics (Svolik, 2012). According to Svolik (2012), the different facets of authoritarianism are commonly reappraised solely and separately, and rarely more systemically. As such, those studies should not focus merely on individuals (leaders), legislatures or bureaucracies, etc., but more preciously take into consideration all those ingredients in an organic whole. Bearing this in mind, we can therefore extract some core dimensions of China's authoritarian politics³¹, namely, the very allied joint-control, authoritarian power-sharing (Svolik, 2012) and pseudo-democratic institutionalization. In this part, I will thus take China as case study for further elucidating these three core pillars.

Evidentially, no dictator can possess sufficient resources to monopolize every aspect of society. Even though many authoritarian states are ruled by one single party (at least, nominally), there are still potential uprisings and turmoil instigated by rivals. In China as elsewhere, a more descriptive concept of neo-authoritarianism in the last decades confirms

³¹Svolik's book of *The Politics of Authoritarian Rule* provides profound explanations of authoritarian politics, nevertheless, Svolik still somehow fails to distinguish the two very concepts of 'totalitarianism' and 'authoritarianism' within a more normative sense (see also Ronald, 1998; Bueno de Mesquita, Bruce and Smith, 2017). For the former, dictators tend to monopolize and permeate their political control into all societal aspects, politics, economy, propaganda, for example; while the latter is more likely adopted for political surveillance. Unlike Svolik's general idea of totalitarianism, I prefer the description of (neo)-authoritarianism proposed by authors like Petracca and Xiong (1990) and Sautman (1992), which differentiates Chinese authoritarian politics from resilience and inclusion, therefore distinguishing from the traditional totalitarianism and authoritarianism.

this idea (M. P and Xiong, 1990; Yun, 1990; Sautman, 1992; Perry, 1993; Zheng, 2007). Both decentralization and alliance-based politics help confront those threats, and this lens was interpreted into some formal and informal institutional designs (secret polices, see also Dittmer, 1995) after Mao's era. Decentralization refers to the multi-party cooperation and political consultation system under the CCP's leadership. The PPCC at all levels is the main consultative body with the United Front Work, which function as a 'social monitor' within governmental settings, etc. Alliance-based politics mainly includes the intra-party and non-party elites, and societal organizations, groups, NGOs, etc. as well as the (semi)-official background, state-owned enterprises, and even party branches in private enterprises, this narrowly network ensuring that the CCP maintains a seemingly overall monopoly over the state and society.

According to Svobik (2012), those power-sharing problems can be further interpreted both in some compromised decision makings and a fragile equilibrium to avoid of conflicts with violence, Unfortunately, in China, political decision-making is always very opaque, without access to first-hand information or entry into the decision-making level. This also renders much of the scholarship speculative in this regard. Nevertheless, authoritarian politics is far more than just one voice, as Nathan (2011) discussed in his classic article *China's changing of the guard: authoritarian resilience*. Although China's current leadership has enforced an unprecedented institutionalization insofar, partisan struggles and factional competition are easily conceivable by the outsiders. Thus, this superficial *peace* is rebalanced based on this power-sharing conditions.

Regarding institutional incentives, many authors attribute this lens to the first two analyses aforementioned without specifically highlighting well-designed authoritarian institutions. In fact, institutional reforms have actually constituted an important part of authoritarian politics with the seemingly establishment of certain controllable political institutions, such as legislature, that legitimates authoritarian rule in a legitimized way with some democratic credentials (Gandhi and Przeworski, 2006; Gandhi, 2008). Svobik's (2012) observations of leadership change in dictatorships that were based on comprehensive data analysis have failed to capture how authoritarian politics resorts to institutionalization with controllable rules, thus acknowledging the relevancy of legitimacy. To do this, authoritarian regimes adopt various institutional designs to firstly eliminate dissidents (or maintain a coalition in a relatively stable framework) within fixed institutions; simultaneously, to enhance regime legitimacy by institutional participation and deliberation. In this sense, institutionalization

does not always link to modernity and democracy. This point is also explained in the fourth chapter with an institutional turn of Chinese deliberative democracy, which indicates that, sometimes authoritarian regimes do even better than those democracies in terms of institutionalization, especially for authoritarian purposes.

The reason why China's authoritarian politics attracted many authors' attention is that, its rapid rise in recent decades intertwined with the authoritarianism of one-party rule and with no evidence of democratization (at least in the regime level). Within the many murmurs, we notice an academic shift from mere expectations of China's democratic transition to reflections on the resilience and the endogenous reasons for China's authoritarianism maintenance. Nonetheless, the Chinese case can always provide with some valuable lessons and even experiences, especially in the context of the rising of the right-wing, populism, xenophobia and anti-globalization in contemporary global politics. These evidences are far more than eulogizing to authoritarianism; conversely, a rethinking of authoritarian politics provides most of the impetus for democrats to rethink what democracy stands for and its future.

2.1.2 China's Authoritarian Vision

Debates on China's authoritarian resilience or envisioning of its future always inspire authors to further look at China's potential democratic transition. Either way, those studies also partly reflect on the current political status quo in China. Very typically, French scholar Jacques Gernet's 'civilization state' (also see Gernet, 1996, 2012) idea that based on the Confucianism was lately reinterpreted by political and historical scholars Andrew J. Nathan in Columbia University in an 'authoritarian resilience' way, it said, although the Chinese Communist regime confronts very poignant challenges, the interim strategies have already contributed to resurrect authoritarian regime within one-party rule. Nevertheless, political scholar Pei Minxin (2012) in Claremont McKenna College holds the opposite view with the indications that the CCP's achievements can only exist superficially and will collapse quickly once the economy declines.

Current discussions on China's flexible authoritarianism are more likely based on the CCP's rejection of a democratic transition³² in the foreseeable future, and more preciously,

³²Among the two camps that predict China's political future, one side, based on transition theory, is convinced that China will be democratized like the West with the multiparty system and competition elections, judicial independence,

its claim to a democracy that with *Chinese characteristics* contrasting the *dead-end* of Western democracy. Those obvious distinctions indicate that China is exploring its own political path that will ultimately lead somewhere with the evident rejection of some discursive democratic elements in Western-style democracy and disguising of its authoritarian nature within. China's authoritarian politics basically took shape in post-Mao era, after the economic reform and opening up in Deng Xiaoping's period. A party-state regime was thus formed. Especially after the Tiananmen Massacre, the decrease of mass movements, ideological unity, the establishment of modern political institutions, the partial and gradual withdrawal of the party-state from the economic and social spheres, are the major changes that contributed to the contemporary foundation of China's politics and very democratic prospect. Although the reiterative decentralization in last two decades, the CCP still dominates the state via the aforementioned systematic designs with the comprehensive penetration of political power.

Michel Oksenberg, Kenneth Lieberthal and David Lampton (1988) have applied the newly concept of the "fragmented authoritarianism" to China. Cabestan (2004) adopted the very formulation of the "soft authoritarianism" with very limited and controlled liberalization. Sautman *et al* (1992) prefer the description of neo-authoritarianism to describe flexible authoritarian politics. Notably, these formulations may differ in names, nevertheless, all of them emphasize the embrace of a more changeable political world and evolution to a more adaptative system without eroding the one-party rule. Rather than the mere check and balance of CCP's political power and will, this describes the continuous evolution of the whole authoritarian system.

and civil society. This transition theory concerns not envisioning conditions for democracy, but the ways in which the success or failure of institutions come about through the interactions of political elites, operating in pursuit of what we assume they perceive as their political interests; another more prevailing view is that China may transit with democratization in the long run, but China's authoritarianism is proved to be resilient in the short term. To note, China's democratic prospect reached its modern-day high and low points mostly based on its authoritarian strain. In Nathan's early work of *China's Transition*, he systematically analyzed the democratic experiments carried out in modern China (except Taiwan), and concluded that these democratic experiments were 'few in number, short in duration, and limited in their democratic characteristics' with the following reasons, ideology, national security problems, militarism, political culture, underdevelopment, peasant mass, laws in the constitutions/institutions, moral failures of the democrats, elite transactions theory. Of course, in today's China, some ingredients have been improved, for example, well-designed authoritarian political institutions, the increasingly strength of the bureaucracy, improved administrative efficiency, and compromised regime legitimacy. It is difficult to say that these improvements have a democratic purpose. At the same time, based on the democratic-transition failure in modern China and the relative stability of contemporary Chinese authoritarianism, China seeks to consolidate this authoritarianism in the short term (at least) rather than to choose a more risky democratization.

Foreseeing that Chinese authoritarian future cannot rely on mere prejudice and personal preference rather than reason. The CCP's options do not include democracy, but rather the 'Chinese model' with *Chinese characteristics* for further declaring a path that differs from Western liberal democracy. Spurning the rigid Soviet system, the CCP tactically resolved the well-known weaknesses of the present economic system, for example, by adopting a "modernized" (but only partially institutionalized authoritarianism) approach (Cabestan, 2004). This cannot affect the CCP's monopoly, and the refusal of any democratization of the present system; a major segment of the contemporary governing system still holds firmly of the predominant position both economically and politically. In short, a more open question is whether such an open and advancing authoritarian system can guarantee the CCP's continuum of authoritarian governance with the premise of cleverly avoiding democracy-related political reforms, and whether this coined 'China model/way' can confirm the previous prophecies.

Confronted with the complex international and domestic environment, more evidence indicates that the biggest looming threats still come from within, people's uprising, for example, if the prerequisites are deemed to have been satisfied. Obviously, the CCP is well aware of these challenges. To date, from Deng Xiaoping's 'no reform will ultimately lead to the dead end' to the proposal of 'deepening the party and national institutional reform programs' in the 19th National Congress led by Xi Jinping, those efforts are all in response to this dilemma for the party and state survival. Compared with other societal reforms, China's current political reforms are rather prudent, and even lagging behind. Chinese rulers carefully balance the maintenance of authoritarianism, initiatives remain in the CCP's hands, and perhaps only time will prove the success or failure of the Chinese authoritarian model.

2.2 Authoritarian Resilience and Regime Inclusion

Many expectations on China's democratic transition have failed, conversely, the Chinese regime has reconsolidated itself by taking various reforms on politics, economy and society in the past three decades (after Tiananmen crisis). The aforementioned analysis does not seem to be sufficient (or partially) to explain the complexity of this resilience. This is by no means to indicate the CCP is paramount while with no rivals and instabilities in this authoritarianism. If so, an in-depth analysis beyond is necessary for further looking into

how China can balance such unfavorable situations in a more flexible authoritarian system; this refers to a more flexible authoritarian resilience and responsive governance.

2.2.1 A Famous Description of Authoritarian Resilience in China

The previous section on China's authoritarian system explained China's political evolution. It seems that those warnings about authoritarian fragilities fail to grasp why this special Chinese case—this particular authoritarian system, has proved to be very resilient³³. The core dimension of this idea is institutionalization which can be divided into four main segments, with: 1) norm-bound succession politics; 2) the increase in meritocratic politics; 3) the differentiation and functional specialization of institutions within the regime; and 4) limited participatory and deliberative institutions³⁴. A brief explanation to those discursive aspects. Firstly, the successions of China's top leaders have always been presented with the constant intergenerational power infightings. Mao and Deng had pre-appointed their successors within *faction* competitions. Nevertheless, after Jiang Zemin's succession, it has gradually turned into a norm-bound succession politics with the more modernized and legitimated pseudo-election. Another historical-cultural lens for revisiting Chinese elite politics, it can be found that a meritocratic governance in contemporary China inherits the 'examination selection' tradition in ancient Chinese dynasties. The seemingly more regular succession process, with rather transparent and fair intra-competition rules, can ultimately ensure that those elites can be chosen, such system can also keep incumbent bureaucrats vigilant to their responsibilities under effectively top-down monitor and supervision.

In addition to the aforementioned mainstream explanations, some other emphasizes on authoritarian resilience have also flourished in the last decades, for instance, the CCP's adaptation to democratization (Kellee, 2007; Bruce, 2008; David, 2008); administrative state reforms (Jonathan, 1996; John, 2003; Yang, 2004), enhancement of legislative power

³³At a time where Western democracy is under threat, it generally remains the normative model in Western thinking, nevertheless, increasingly less as the probable outcome of historical evolution.

³⁴According to Scharpf's (1970) theory of input legitimacy (citizen representation) and output legitimacy (effectiveness), the latter output legitimacy is limited by its narrow empirical scope with some recently designed input and participatory institutions, this idea is also mentioned in Scharpf's democratic view. Scharpf (1997, 2000) writes that "democracy would be an empty ritual if the political choices of governments would not be able to achieve a high degree of effectiveness in achieving the goals, and avoiding the dangers, that citizens collectively care about." Also, according to Huntington, political legitimacy can be attained through other ways rather than the mere representative government which derives its legitimacy from representing citizens' interests and also consistent with the principle of democracy. For China, regime continuation is based on output legitimacy with the 'good governance'.

(Young, 2002; Kevin, 2009) and the strengthening of the coercive state apparatus (Tai, 1996; Murray and Eric, 2007). These fresh evidences enhance the understanding of China's authoritarianism and shed light on some other alternatives. American political analyst Robert A Kagan (2009) lately proposed a new concept of authoritarian consolidation by reemphasizing the plasticity of authoritarianism; Bruce Gilley (2009) believes that China's political leaderships can obtain long-term legitimacy via continuous institutional changes and performance that based on the fixed institutions. Gary Sigley (2006) explains that the reconstruction of the party-state system enhances its stability in the restructuring relation between party and state (also see Shambaugh and Brinley, 2008). Sebastian Heilmann and Oliver Melton (2013) point that the successful transformation of China's *adaptive* planning system and integration of sporadic local experimentations into national politics reform is the key to the regime responsiveness.

Also, notably, a clearer division of labor within and between the Party and government also contribute to the further maintenance of authoritarianism in a more professional way. Nevertheless, this institutional differentiation within Chinese regime, on one hand, has not revolutionized the party-state's nature and will ultimately serve for the one-party system. Besides, the CCP's influence prevails in those institutions and makes policy for all realms of action. As a result, limited participation and deliberation via various institutional designs tend to soften these settings. Respectively, Nathan's (2014) focus is more likely concerned with the political participation and deliberation, he said little on how these interactions are presented in the public sphere. Since 2000, academic research on deliberative democracy and, later Chinese political discourses have all attached great importance to deliberative governance in manifold realms that leads to a completely different direction away from elections and beyond political deliberation. Such practice does give people a say, and the public is being valued in such interactions.

Nevertheless, reinterpretations of authoritarian resilience have backlashed in hierarchies (Fewsmith and Nathan, 2019) in recent years, especially in the strongman politics in Xi's era. The fiercer Party infights and presidency constitutional amendments in 2018 indicated that institutionalization is merely an optimistic fantasy and may be overestimated in China's authoritarian politics. Fewsmith's (2018) revisiting of top leader succession and elites' infighting also revealed that the institutionalization that many authors endorsed reflected the relative weakness in certain cases, and was sometimes defeated by unspoken-rules within intra-party struggle, which are not subject to institutionalization.

In recent years, the promotion of the Politburo members and head of Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) during Xi's era, as well as the reshaping of central political power structure have largely led to the restoration of a new centralization. These phenomena present great uncertainties for the political future and cannot merely be resolved by the institutionalization aforementioned. Later literature on authoritarian resilience mostly focuses on the adoption of preexisting institutions (or latterly created) to continuously concentrate political power, purge political rivals and corrupt cadres and strengthen the institutional role, for instance, Xi's reforms on 'presidential tenure' turns him to be the true legal commander-in-chief. In short, facing the complex and changing Chinese politics, two core discussions may help better studying the China's authoritarian resilience, firstly, Fewsmith and Nathan's (2019) idea of the relationship between institutionalization and authoritarianism still provides important references; secondly, more informal political norms (Dittmer, 1995) should be highlighted to analyze the Chinese politics visions beyond the traditional-formal institutionalization structure.

Neither political nor social science is good at predicting a state's political future, nevertheless, it can be always be inspired by combing and analyzing those historical experiences. No matter whether we are an optimist or a pessimist, China's development always seems surprising. Some mainstream democratic theories have failed to explain China's political evolution, which has led some pragmatic politicians and authors to turn to the studies of the Chinese authoritarianism and its continuum. Different from the traditional totalitarian and Western individualistic liberal democracy, the Chinese regime-type has been in constant self-correction and learning rather than determined by rigid design. This 'resilience' explanation is acceptable, but it is not merely limited to the exterior institutional arrangements. This rebalancing is embedded in China's political design, cultural traditions, economic systems, social conventions, and unspoken rules.

2.2.2 Chinese Regime Inclusion and Responsive Governance

The evidence given above is far from a conclusion. In this part, more preciously, another perspective than the idea that authoritarian resilience contributes to the Chinese political continuum, authoritarian regime inclusion, will be expounded. It focuses on the the CCP's political reforms for further learning and coping with the complex political environment at home and abroad, thus better integrating into the international community. According

to the classic definition of regime inclusion by Jowitt (1975), “it is referring to the attempts by the party elites to expand the internal boundaries of regime’s political, productive, and decision-making systems, to integrate itself with the non-official...sectors of society rather than insulate itself from them.” White (1986) also argues that inclusive regimes are vital for soviet-type regimes that can “absorb and process demands, expand the consultative capacities of their systems, give a stake in the system to the various sections of their populations, and perhaps preempt demands for more far-reaching and anti-systemic change”. For these communist regimes, regime inclusion is always the optimal choice to unite all societal forces for further maintaining their authoritarian rule.

Xiaojun Yan (2011), for example, gave profound observations on inclusive regime institutions in China, especially the People’s Political Consultative Conference (PPCC, *renmin zhengxie* 人民政协) and CCP’s United Front (*tongyi zhanxian* 统一战线)³⁵, for their potential functions and mobilizations within the party-state regime. Yan describes the C/LPPCC as a special Chinese institutional and inclusive invention that can ultimately ensure the CCP maintains surveillance of society through these far-ranging branches. This idea is however still constrained by an institutional dimension echoing previous discussions: the C/LPPCC partially functions as political liaison, inspection, investigation and performance review, information gathering and reporting system. These functions contribute to a more inclusive system that guarantees the CCP can ally with the social elites and maintain the one-party dictatorship and *vice versa* thanks to gatekeepers.

The defects of this idea are, first of all, C/LPPCC members (they are not called *representatives* but *members*) are not elected. They are relatively independent from the party-state’s rank-and-file control, albeit C/LPPCC members in different constituencies possess a wide range of expertise and societal links. Still, they have complex alienations with the CCP, the one hand, PPCC members are excluded and sometimes marginalized in the authoritarian monopoly without any real decision-making power; also, to note, the CCP regards the PPCC as a merely pseudo-consultative, sometimes quasi-deliberative body³⁶

³⁵The united front work department is a sub-sector under the Party Committee at all levels (town(ship)-level only have united front work department dispatch agency) in the four sets of teams (Party Committee, people’s congress, government and C/LPPCC) rather than an institutional design.

³⁶Whether it is the C/LPPCC or the United Front, these more or less institutionalized settings have been given the name of ‘deliberation’ that in line with the ‘*xieshang* 协商’ in Chinese language. They are consistent with the official propaganda of consultative democracy (*xieshang minzhu* 协商民主), which is the basic political policy and democratic discourse in China.

which it can instrumentalize. Consolidating its predominance *via* the preexisting extensive social foundations within PPCC members, thereby, ensures that all the different voices can be heard unimpeded, which also explains the responsive governance of the last decades.

Even so, this does not signal the revival of the C/LPPCC, on the contrary, in the context of the CCP political power recentralization, the C/LPPCC has become more of an accessory. The PPCC's original and functional design is 'political consultation' (*zhengzhi xieshang* 政治协商). Since 1956, the C/LPPCC's evolutionary path indicates that participation and consultation in politics is the uppermost mission. Nevertheless, a reexamination of the C/LPPCC's annual proposals made by its members are depoliticizing in the last decades, with few titillating topics. Thus, the C/LPPCC's dysfunctioning is partially eroding the regime inclusiveness with increasingly limited participation and deliberation. In short, inclusiveness in authoritarianism hinges on regime openness, democratic-like reform acceptance, public responsiveness and ultimate influence on decision-making which are based on participatory devices and deliberative designs. Superficially, various channels have been designed for achieving this purpose including (non)-institutionalized settings in multidiscipline, multi-layer approaches, which is far beyond the scope of the C/LPPCC. The CCP also adjusts its inclusiveness according to the gauge of regime threat for better adjusting its ruling.

3 Authoritarian Deliberation

The disappointment analyzed in the first chapter towards representative democracy, and the enthusiasm over deliberative democracy with genealogical and systemic analysis, are all rendering the studies on deliberation and deliberative democracy more inclusive. Also, students in this realm have made great efforts to bring this normative ideal 'down to earth'. When turned to the authoritarian Chinese context, beyond this chaos, perhaps, it might be argued first that differentiating between and among deliberation and some other synonyms, especially consultation is a fundamental issue which is also the premise for the conceptual analysis of deliberative democracy. Many authors risk taking the loosely defined concept of 'deliberation' and 'deliberative democracy' to reinterpret their observations and case studies. Others firmly limit themselves within the normative paradigms but fail to interpret a rather fair meaning. Confronting this dilemma, I will firstly give a brief explanation on

the distinction between deliberation and consultation, theoretically clarifying the ambiguity among the two concepts.

Secondly, I revisit the rather mainstream Western Chinese studies on Chinese deliberative democracy. The legacies of authoritarianism in China provide authors with the opportunity to study deliberation beyond traditional democratic politics. This idea may be provoking but no author can ignore the increasingly paradoxical coexistence of authoritarianism and consultation/deliberation. Anyway, this study is not to prove the failure of democracy, but more likely to expound the relationship between authoritarian consultation/deliberation, political reform and stability in the very special Chinese context. Compared with domestic arguments in China, Western views are more radical and sometimes offensive. Even when they admit this paradox, these authors are somehow still reluctant to accept that this formulation may have a role to play for democratization. In line with the domestic views in the third chapter, a relatively comprehensive image can thus be drawn for a clearer understanding of the status quo and conceptual reappraisal of deliberative democracy in China.

3.1 Consultation and Deliberation

Consultation and deliberation are not that difficult to distinguish at least normatively: the former indicates policymakers listen to and absorb in public opinions through established institutions, with results being relatively irrelevant to the final decision. In many democracies, public consultation is also quite common for mobilizing and engaging public participation. Nevertheless, this kind of consultation can involve only simple “notice and comment” procedures in which policymakers are required by law to post possible feedbacks publicly, so that the public can register their disagreements and suggestions for change (Bächtiger, Dryzek, Mansbridge and Warren, 2018), commonly, lacking interactive elements pertaining to deliberation and negotiation³⁷. Although the consultation is

³⁷ Another interesting perspective comes from Arnstein’s (2015) typology of citizen participation, which further encourages a more enlightened dialogue in the public sphere. This ladder refers to ‘manipulation-therapy-informing-consultation-placation-partnership-delegated power-citizen control’, for the consultation part, the public is simply treated as statistical abstractions and an information collector in the consultative process, since the powerholders do not want the real transition from ‘public opinion’ to ‘decision making’. Nevertheless, Arnstein did not mention the deliberation stage within the nine rungs, but more likely, it is in line with the ‘citizen control’ that empowers citizen participating in citizen panels. To Arnstein, similar to the gap between the normative deliberation and practice, defects exist in the *ideal* citizen control that need to be restored by constant redesigning.

commonly not regarded as a democratic means, the public openness at best approximates to the *general* democratic rule despite with the lesser importance of outcomes and decision making. Also, public consultation commonly presents with a top-down fashion that is increasingly adopted both in democracies and authoritarian regime such as a *cheap* governmental method, which is stipulated in laws and regulations or appeared in the form of obligations and duties, government often consults and receives prior informed consent from collectivities before engaging in extractive activities and decision making.

According to He and Warren (2011), the consultation is “a form of rule in which power holders use communication to collect the preferences of those their decisions will affect and take those preferences into account as the information relevant to their decision-making.” This definition further distinguished consultation from deliberation by an officially controlled input to freer intercommunication. The undemocratic nature of consultation is present in procedural pre-setting control and has little effect on policy changes. In other words, if good governance, better decision-making, efficient policy implementation and consultation are closely related, they benefit from the collecting and learning from citizen suggestions. Rather than the impetus from spontaneous citizen’s participation and deliberation, these quasi-democratic reforms disguise the regime monopoly and buy the regime additional support and legitimacy.

The literature on deliberation and deliberative democracy is vast, and I have already introduced deliberation *per se* as well as other competing visions in the first chapter, deliberative and participatory, representative democracy, collective decision-making, scale and forms of deliberation, for example. I thus omit the conceptual introduction instead of highlighting the relationship between the deliberation and consultation. Two fundamental questions should be mentioned: *what is the boundary between consultation and deliberation*; and *can more deliberation bring a more positive correlation with democracy*? Answers to these challenges are theoretically feasible. In terms of deliberation, it needs higher investments and costs. As its conceptual description indicates, citizens are internalized into rational, reason-based participants in deliberation; simultaneously, an equal, pluralistic and inclusive external civil society is also sine qua non for further guaranteeing the quality of deliberation. Albeit efforts have been done by democrats to solve those practical dilemmas, the contradiction between normative standards and practical implementation is still the biggest obstacle lies in deliberative democracy research.

Unlike the top-down, accessorial and generally unidirectional consultation, which the government has ultimately adopted for daily political duties, as a civil-society-spontaneously activity, deliberation is designed to offset against the aggregated decision-making brought by the representative system. It does not necessarily relate to final decisions, but the public participation, rational expression and interactions in the deliberative process will enhance the legitimacy, transparency and democracy of the decision making. Evidently, this cannot be done through mere consultations. It seems that deliberation has brought light to the contemporary democratic plights, nevertheless, it does not mean the more deliberation the better. Many authors regard deliberation as a panacea in their discourse with the thinking that deliberation is the transcendence of representation. In fact, a deliberative approach can remedy the estrangement between representativeness and votes under the representative system mentioned in Chapter one and also dispel mere interest aggregation, but not all problems can be solved through deliberation (perhaps on-the-spot decision can be made after mini-public deliberation). Voting is still necessary in a way. Also, prolific debates and inefficiencies brought by democratic deliberation should also make a part for rebalancing deliberation's role in decision-making and cultivation of social society.

3.2 A Seemingly Paradoxical Articulation between Authoritarianism and Deliberation

It is not easy to shift the attention of deliberative democracy studies to the context of authoritarianism. Although some pioneers (e.g. Habermas, 1997; Bohman, 2000; Sass and Dryzek, 2014) mentioned in their research that deliberative democracy can exist in diverse cultures and political backgrounds, and even took China as an example, mainstream studies usually marginalize this part until the formulation of 'authoritarian deliberation' proposed by He and Warren (2011) that shed fresh non-Western light in this field. In some non-democratic regimes (e.g. authoritarian, hybrid, incomplete democratic transitions regimes), a deliberative approach is adopted in a state of controllable fashion (deliberative procedure, influence). Authoritarian rulers regard this method as a way of enhancing and facilitating a better monopoly. After closer examination, this controllable and functionalist-oriented deliberation can generate some unexpected gains, a bottom-up grassroots democratization,

for example. This part will further revisit ‘authoritarian deliberation’ and explore how this discourse functions in China.

3.2.1 Deliberative Authoritarianism as an Alternative

The very idea of authoritarian deliberation coined by He and Warren (2011) provided quite a fresh lens for studying deliberative democracy in authoritarian countries like China. In fact, this is not new. For instance, Dryzek’s (2006) classic work *Deliberative Global Politics: Discourse and Democracy in a Divided World*, emphasized that deliberation can be presented within a diverse and complex world, “...these possibilities for critical interchange in the engagement of proliferating discourses open the door to some major opportunities for introducing democracy into the international system...”. Also, in Dryzek’s early interpretation of the transnational democracy in 2002, he said that, “a deliberative democracy should be mature at home in the international system than liberal aggregative models of democracy, only so long as it can escape its tie to liberal constitutionalism...thus to specify in international politics”. Bohman (2000) also highlighted public deliberation and cultural pluralism in a multicultural lens in his book *Public Deliberation: Pluralism, Complexity, and Democracy*. This idea was later reinterpreted with the implementation of deliberative democracy in multicultural societies in Valadez’s (2018) book chapter of *Deliberative Democracy, Political Legitimacy, and Self-Determination in Multi-Cultural Societies*. Those plural resources have inspired the re-focus on the Chinese case with the formulation of ‘authoritarian deliberation’.

Descriptions of Chinese authoritarian politics in the previous section ultimately serves as the backdrop for further explaining consultation and deliberation in authoritarianism as being the compromised response to the authoritarian resilience and inclusiveness, while very uneven in scope and effectiveness. He’s (2011) interpretation of this paradoxical phenomenon is that deliberation is limited in scope and focuses on particular problems of governance with no apparent interest in regime-level democratization. It is conceptually possible, empirically existent, and functionally motivated. For further explaining those flexibilities and potentials, we note that, even in authoritarianism, it is still possible for limited democratic empowerment and deliberative influence on the political decision makings to happen. Democracy has never been a necessary condition for deliberation. In this concept, *instrumental* and *strategic* models are considered as important ways of

communication and deliberation. As Goodin argues, deliberation is about discovery and persuasion, and is not in itself a decision-making procedure: *'first talk, then vote'* (Goodin, 2008). Even in democracies, decisions can only be more deliberatively legitimate, but not necessarily so. Decisions are typically the consequence of voting or vote-based authorization of representatives, not merely deliberation³⁸.

Bearing these doctrines in mind, students in this realm have explained the reasonable existence of authoritarian deliberation, at least theoretically and normatively. In order to further prove its feasibilities, He lately contributed to two main dimensions: first, a further distinction between contemporary authoritarian deliberation and Maoist consultation. The former, "deliberation" implies that decision-makers will do more than solely solicit inputs. Rulers will give (or permit) space for people to discuss issues and engage in given topics. Decisions are thus made to be responsive, rather than merely consultative for ideological purpose. To note, deliberation advocated by both academia and propaganda in China's authoritarian context is more likely constituted of technical and hierarchical (official *vs* public) interactions. But consultations in Mao's era were more oriented towards political mobilization of the masses, and interactions were less critical.

Furthermore, He carried out thorough fieldwork and observation at grassroots level, especially in the southeast coastal area. The collected evidence further proved the empirical feasibility of the authoritarian deliberation. In other words, this rather provoking idea practically had several prerequisites: firstly, regime-level democratic change has stalled as the deliberative cases under scrutiny remained only local; secondly, command, consultative and deliberative authoritarianism have coexisted and functioned altogether within these experiments with much overlaps; last of all, authoritarian deliberation *per se* was inherited

³⁸Last three decades have witnessed the prosperities of deliberative democracy, while such enthusiasms trigger those theorists or political scientists reflecting on the quite provoking question of if deliberative democracy can always be a wise move as generally imagined. In addition to some extreme pessimists, John and Elizabeth (2002), for example, they believe that deliberation makes people feel frustrated with the system that made them deliberate and thus not beneficial to the decision-making; the seemingly fair diversion may the reflection on deliberation with its role in the political system and decision making. Obviously, among the many elements that contribute to decision-making, deliberation is not decisive and cannot be functioned alone, meanwhile, it is not always compatible with others. Morrell (2005), for example, argues that "deliberation can have positive consequences for Citizens' internal political efficacy. It is likely, though, that these effects are neither guaranteed nor as directs deliberative theorists expect"; Another example is the deliberative polling designed by Fishkin, within which adopted the method of a combination of random selection (statistical representative) and designation (legitimized representative), it seems, to many cases, there are still incompatibilities between representativeness and deliberativeness in deliberative polling simultaneously. In short, these arguments highlight a more empirical challenge for the inclusiveness studies of deliberative democracy and decision making.

from the Chinese rich political consultative and deliberative tradition, Confucianism, for example.

Among the two predictions regarding authoritarian deliberation in China, one possibility is that deliberative mechanisms will transform authoritarianism in ways supportive of civil society through fostering regime democratization; another possibility is the legitimacy-oriented pursuit that overrides the democratic empowerment. For the moment, the second prophecy seems to be more in line with the current political reforms in China. This discourse has been adopted in the official propaganda: after the Third Plenary Session of the 18th Central Committee, the CCP has issued various guidelines on deliberative politics. Ironically, those discourses have not been taken seriously, compared to elections, democratic empowerment. Authoritarianism obviously does not eliminate all dissent. For the remaining uncertainty and legitimacy problems, a deliberative approach is therefore chosen as an alternative in the disguise of democratic reforms. Evidence can be found in emerging cases, in which deliberative methods are adopted for co-opting dissenters and maintaining social order in a functional-derived fashion. Seemingly, there are high expectations for authoritarian deliberation in a new wave of political reform. If it really works, future research may have to better interpret this alternative approach with its true values.

3.2.2 Authoritarian Deliberation Revisited

Most unorthodox, renascent concepts will always be commonly questioned or even criticized when they are first proposed. Authoritarian deliberation, for example, makes many democrats uncomfortable within the democratic deliberation literature. Since it was first put forward by He and Warren in 2011, He and his followers have defended this idea through various related subjects: the conceptual construction (He and Warren, 2006, 2011) provided with a clearer theoretical framework; scholarship on authoritarian discussions and deliberation on the Chinese internet (Jiang, 2009, 2010; MacKinnon, 2010, 2011; Lewis, 2013) demonstrate the state-control and -lead online interactions; deliberative cultural resources (Min, 2009; He, 2014), especially the Confucianism; comparative political studies (He, 2006) between West and China; empirical case studies (Kornreich, Vertinsky and Potter, 2012; Zhang, 2013; Romano, 2018) within various deliberative settings and designs; deliberative capacity building (Dryzek, 2009; Tang, 2014), and authoritarian deliberative

governance (Chen and Xu, 2014; Tang, 2015; Li and He, 2016; Niu, and Wagenaar, 2018), etc.

Those fruitful studies have brought consideration to Chinese deliberative democracy studies in world politics and demonstrated the possible and potential existence of deliberative politics and governance in authoritarianism with a fresh non-Western perspective. These possibilities have also proved feasible in real political practice and have later been confirmed by experiments. Also, authoritarian rulers creatively and contingently employ those quasi-democratic tools, such as deliberative polling and forums, referenda, internet platforms and so on, and always ensure that the scope of these tools are limited, hence, to obtain consent and bolster legitimacy (He, and Wagenaar, 2018).

A later methodological revisit of authoritarian deliberation can be further analyzed in two segments: a beyond-regime-type perspective to discarding the preexisting obsessions of the dichotomy between democracy and authoritarianism. In China, since abundant cases have preceded theory, it is impossible to understand the ongoing political reforms by ignoring those practices or stubbornly holding an entrenched democracy-oriented political stand. Deliberative practices have all been vividly explained in different regimes and political contexts, such as Vietnam, Cuba, Singapore (Rodan, 2018) and France (Romano, 2018). Another lens is the rising authoritarian rule (O'Donnell, Schmitter and Whitehead 1986; Magaloni, 2008; Svobik, 2012; O'donnell and Schmitter, 2013) that with the disappointments and critiques over the liberal future. Authoritarianism is inevitable even in democracies, where authorities present themselves as participative and deliberative, but it turns out to be *merely* window-dressing when decision-making is determined by a priori agendas or backroom deals. This two-dimensional analysis explains the rational existence of authoritarian deliberation both theoretically and practically.

Another crucial question remains: how far can authoritarian deliberative politics and governance take China forward and keep the regime from collapsing in the foreseeable future? In other words, can this kind of paradoxical incorporation of authoritarianism and deliberation which seems relatively stable be a long-lasting strategy, by which the CCP can maintain its ruling eternally *via* the check and balance of deliberative politics? Nevertheless, what is certain that these democratic-looking techniques and political reforms indeed render the authoritarian regime more resilient and inclusive, even when they are an expedient lacking regime-level democratization.

Also, studies on authoritarian deliberation reinforce the reconsideration and pursuit of democracy in a flashback, for instance, convergent similarities between China and Western democracies such as France, which is commonly considered as a democratic regime. Nevertheless, based on the one-year observation on the public debates and deliberations organized by la Commission nationale du débat public (CNDP), I would say that deliberation in most cases is sometimes merely symbolic and with little essential difference from deliberation under authoritarianism. Thus, participation and deliberation have the effect of implicating the citizens' consent into the hegemonic authoritarian (like China) or neoliberal (Western Europe) order. Nevertheless, decision-making remains the opaquest enigma regardless of deliberation. Even if the deliberative process and decision-making are not connected, according to Steenbergen, Bächtiger, Spörndli and Steiner's (2003) very 'Discourse Quality Index' analysis, deliberations in the CNDP, in the best case achieve a mini-public deliberation. Nevertheless, in a large-scale sense, despite the mobilization, the deliberativeness and deliberative quality are degraded with excluded minorities (e.g. refugees, blacks) and authorities' prior interventions.

Deliberative democrats are commonly assuming a firm link between democracy and deliberation, dichotomizing democracy and authoritarianism, orthodox and unorthodox political theories, sometimes with intentional marginalization of certain political practices. He (2018) thus wrote that, "unless we are willing to turn a blind eye to these perversions of participatory, deliberative processes in liberal democracies in the name of liberal doctrine, say, we have no alternative than painstaking empirical-conceptual research into the functioning of these deliberative systems". Deliberativists themselves also make their best to bridge the gap between the ideal utopia and real practice, carefully rebalancing the concept stretching and thoroughly examining the different deliberative designs. It is gratifying that deliberative politics is becoming more and more acceptable, flexible, and practical. Also, deliberation is now playing the role of bringing nuance both in democracies and authoritarian regimes. But it is necessary to always be vigilant, a time-test theory needs to evolve continuously, rather than risking coining a quite superficial concept.

3.2.3 A Deliberative Governance Turn

Another highlight in this toolbox of authoritarian deliberation in China is a deliberative governance turn. This very proposal is mainly advocated by authoritarian deliberation

supporters and lead by He Baogang, Leib Ethan, Mark Warren, Tang Beibei, James Fishkin and Min Jing. Such a turn achieved a transformation of the very normative idea to the more down-to-earth practice of governance. That said, this conception of authoritarian deliberation is analytically useful for considering other deliberative types functioning in an authoritarian setting. This thinking and practical logic has further reversed some orthodox doctrines in the mainstream deliberative democracy theory, and it has enriched a broader understanding of a deliberative system.

Following this general analysis of the entangled relationship between and among the government, governance and deliberative governance in the first chapter, how this *turn* can be presented in China based on this authoritarian deliberation concept? A deliberative approach to governance in China constitutes a vital complementary part to elections. To better grasp this point, several relations between the CCP, the strong state and civil society need to be reexamined, and this analysis always makes connections with good governance (e.g. efficiency, responsibility and responsiveness). In the CCP's reframing of Chinese deliberative democracy and deliberative governance, the party's leadership is the core initiator of participation and deliberation, and it is the strong state and government who undertake the policy implementation. As He (2006) states, "in the authoritarian context, it is impossible to develop any form of the deliberation without backing from governmental officials." This purpose can be achieved by the (in)direct involvements of state-controlled institutions or (semi)-official background organizations.

Both the regime and civil society benefit from this deliberative governance. As for the former, authoritarian deliberation protagonists like He think that the single deliberative institutions and based governance cannot develop independently without competitive elections in the governmental settings. Nevertheless, this method does reduce the demands for elections. As for the public, they buy in this good governance based on their participation, consultation and deliberation in the state policy-making process (both when symbolic and impactful). The entwisted relationships among various stockholders and interactions constitute a panorama of what deliberative governance looks like in the Chinese authoritarian context and gives an insight on how it functions as a newly-type governance for various purposes. These focuses are further explained in the chapter three.

3.3 Authoritarian Deliberation-Driven Democracy in the Grassroots at All?

If the aforementioned chapters are still debating over the conceptual demarcation of deliberative democracy, in this part, I make a bold presupposition based on the fact that since authoritarian deliberation can only be carried out at the local level in the foreseeable future, this model may conditionally facilitate the bottom-up democratic political reform in contemporary China. The evidence is based on the rather nascent phenomenon of deliberative governance in the last two decades. Despite the fact that many authors are currently with low expectations on China's authoritarian politics, especially with the political power recentralization in Xi's era, deliberative governance ultimately provides an opportunity. When looking back at Chinese political reforms in the last three decades, it is impossible for a top-down bureaucratic fashion reform to bring democratization. The only glimmer of hope is bound to be pinned on the bottom-up political reform even if both grassroots elections and deliberation are mostly stalled. Then, inspired by the bottom-up deliberative practices, this section will further discuss the aforementioned assumption with its potentials.

I start the discussion by first briefly distinguishing between the two concepts of grassroots and local. The grassroots (*jiceng* 基层) is a very politicized term inherited from the socialist collective thinking since Mao's era and which corresponds to the high-level settings (power structure). Local (*difang* 地方) more links to the central level in an administrative division and geographical sense. For instance, the local legislative consultations in the fifth Chapter focuses more on the ongoing research on provincial and municipal legislation (relatively lower level with local regulation-making power). In this part, more attention is paid on the autonomous grassroots entities like villages and urban communities to investigate public participation, deliberation and governance, and more precisely, how these methods further reshape the local political landscapes and thus provide potential impetus for a bottom-up democracy.

The book of *Handbook of Local Governance in Contemporary China* edited by professor Jianxing Yu (2019) in Zhejiang University introduces the latest trends in Chinese local governance based on a historical-cultural combing. It also elucidates its main characteristics and future expectations. Very typically, the local governments still dominate daily politics. In the local

governance, interactions with other societal entities and organizations are all influenced by the governments' philosophy and planning. Fortunately, away from the political center, local governance can be more flexibly adjusted and the division of responsibilities in the vertical hierarchies reconstructed, leading to delegating more powers to lower grassroots governments, and providing more inclusiveness to the market and social entities to realize growth and promote collaborative governance based on cooperation (Yu *et al.*, 2019).

After closer examination, unlike the seemingly unidirectional and order-obedience relation with higher-ups in local governance, grassroots autonomy offers the public freer space to participate and deliberate. According to Lang (2019), Chinese grassroots deliberation has evolved with the logic of “democratic consultation”, “strategic decision consultation” then to the “democratic hearing” and may ultimately lead to a deliberative turn. These clues are traceable, in the newly amended *Village Organization Law* that reemphasizes the function of grassroots party branches and some villagers' self-government organizations: “all issues involving the rural area economy, politics, culture of development, specially government and financial affairs should be discussed in the villagers' meeting”³⁹.

Those changes are based on village elections and other participatory practices (Shi, 1997; He, 2007) and administrative reforms (Yang, 2004), and have lately expanded their scope to the participatory budgeting in several pilot schemes in Wenling in Zhejiang province, Wuxi in Jiangsu province and Qingdao in Shandong province, etc. Budget discussion and approval is carried out regularly in debates between the government and the public, and many local governments further stipulate the participatory budgeting into local regulations as a procedural responsibility that governments must follow. Also, some large municipal communities can enjoy certain funds at their disposal for both daily operations and infrastructure construction. Those cases are mainly concentrated in the rather developed Eastern region that characterized by thriving private business and an individualistic public sphere which further contribute to the freer deliberation amid the public. Nevertheless, for the more conservative Midwest, the deliberative future is full of uncertainties with rigid bureaucracies and declining local elections. More likely, authoritarianism coercion will be tamed and regulated with a consultative approach on the basis of a relatively backward economy and conservative culture. Anyway, those changes have enhanced a crucial trade-off between the legitimation and efficiency of the local governance.

³⁹The *Organic Law of the Villagers Committee of the People's Republic of China*, revised and adopted at the 17th meeting of the Standing Committee of the 11th National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China, October 28, 2010.

He Baogang *et al* (2006, 2011, 2012, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2018, 2019) conducted long-term observation on the grassroots deliberative experimentations in China, especially in Chinese rural villages. Villagers can make decisions directly on the spot or in some cases can influence collective decisions indirectly. Tang Beibei (2015) gives a reappraisal of grassroots governance in urban Chinese communities. By adopting three key criteria proposed by John Dryzek (2010) for analyzing the deliberative quality, namely, authentic, inclusive and consequential deliberation, Tang came to the conclusion that a deliberative approach may further liberate the interactions between officials and the public. The evidence may be thin and insufficient to support the scene of deliberative governance in a prosperous place, nevertheless, they indicate that deliberative reforms emerged in authoritarian context and turned out to be adaptable. External pressure, official control, for example, will suppress or even reshape its outlook somehow, but when deliberative politics becomes a consensus in local politics, the two sides may ultimately reach a certain compromise which is made in secret and unspoken, but objectively produces certain democratic effects.

4 Authoritarian Consultation

To put it simply, consultative authoritarianism is a more backward form than deliberative authoritarianism. Nevertheless, these two forms are always intertwined and cannot be rigidly dichotomized. Compared with the aforementioned more controversial grassroots practices, regime-level political reform tends to be more conservative and regressive. Meanwhile, the openness and participation in some *vital* domains are also rather prudent with the simple consultation of the public, legislative consultation, for example. In a nutshell, the key differences between authoritarian consultation and deliberation lie in the hierarchical division (state-society or central-local) and their related facets (e.g. power consultation and non-power deliberation). Thus, discussions in this chapter are mainly based on the very conceptual analysis of authoritarian consultation and its corresponding macro-political reforms, as well as its limitations.

4.1 Authoritarian Consultation and National Political Reform

Consultation is usually regarded as a superficial top-down governance comprising opinion collection, usually associated with authorities. In an authoritarian context, the connection with authoritarian ruling can be taking place both at the procedural level or with a

monopolistic decision-making process. As such, should we ask if consultation is always useless? Maybe not, as consultations are useful when deliberation malfunctions, especially in the large-scale decision-making process. That said, not all things can be deliberated, or can be resolved via deliberation. Scale problems, time limitation, division of labor, public mobilization and motivation, etc. are all restricting deliberation to a more conditional use. For this sake, consultation can be helpful for better policy formulation and decision making. This method is especially important for authoritarian regimes, where good policy making, and governance are being formed and keep changing based on the information collected by consultation. Our analysis may dispel some of the criticism of the CPPCC's authoritarian consultation function.

4.1.1 Consultative Authoritarianism in Theory

In contemporary politics, authoritarian regimes are no longer being traditionally considered as despotic monopolies, and rulers may (un)willingly adopt various democratic-like methodologies to further engage public's participation and even deliberation, including elections, parliaments, parties, consultative forums and national deliberative assemblies (Levitsky and Way, 2010; He and Warren, 2011). These political settings play different roles than in democracies when they are being adopted mainly for an authoritarian purpose. Thus, this chapter analyzes consultation based on the division of different authoritarian systems (Geddes, Wright and Frantz, 2012) and Levitsky and Way's (2010) very idea of competitive authoritarianism with hybrid types. These authors all take China as a case for comparative analysis. According to He and Warren (2011), a consultative authoritarianism approach has to do with *command authoritarianism* and *deliberative authoritarianism*, with very limited voice inputs and influences on decision making while the decision is made by unelected-or not competitively elected-rulers.

Compared with the potential bottom-up democratization that brought by deliberation approach, consultation is more likely a top-down pressure that has less relevance with decisions with more procedural manipulations, and in which authoritarian rulers provide good service not through protracted administrative and legal procedures, deliberation, for example, but by virtue of unchecked power and magnanimity. According to Przeworski and Manin (1999), this pressure-dispersion model with limited inputs is unaccountable and unrepresentative, and sometimes unsympathetic to public opinions with very weak political

legitimacy (Buchanan *et al.*, 1962; Svolik, 2012). But those challenges seem to be properly handled by CCP *via* ‘a third way’ between empowerment deliberation and rigid political consultation and mobilization (for instance, the Soviet Union-style public participations and consultations in mobilization and decision-making, see also Martin, 2013; Gueorguiev, 2014) without compromising its core political interests with the democratic turn. Evidently, this type of consultation functions with other means than *laissez-faire*, and the following case analysis will explain how this model works concretely.

The example of legislative consultation is interpreted as a triangular consultative game amongst the CCP, legislators (National People’s Congress, NPC) and PPCC (sometimes, different cases will engage certain outsiders’ participations). Despite a broad range of ‘input institutions’ (Nathan, 2003) designed for collective decisions, laws are often unanimously enacted, this indicates how plausible these inputting are. This formalized consultation is also present in some less-authoritarian regimes, for instance, legislative discussions in the People’s Action Party in Singapore, and the ‘Open Government’ policy for the legislative hearing (*Otkrytoe pravitelstvo*) in contemporary Russia. In order to further legitimize the authoritarian rule *via* legislative processes and written laws, according to He and Warren (2011), five methods are therefore adopted for achieving this goal: co-opting with the oppositional and pro-regime elites; gathering information from society; opening up forums for exchange with business elites; credibly increasing governmental transparency and deflecting responsibility for the unpopular decisions. This progressive ladder design allows the consultation to be peacefully embedded in the authoritarian governance, and gradually accepted by the public.

It is a common path for institutionalizing consultation in authoritarian power-sharing account for both intra-elite and among-societal interactions, like the Politburo Standing Committee of the Chinese Communist Party (1949-present) or the Consultative Council of Saudi Arabia (1993-present) that typically established the formal rules concerning membership, jurisdiction, protocol, and decision making that both facilitate the exchange of information among the ruling elites and provide for an easy assessment of compliance with those rules (see also MacFarquhar, 1974; Herb, 1999; Barros, 2002). In China, limited consultative influences of the rulers’ allies, sometimes among society, are referred to as ‘indirect leadership (*jianjie lingdao* 间接领导)’ with authoritarian institutional and participatory devices and consultative organs. For instance, these collective opinions after CPPCC’s consultation usually need procedural approval by the Party Committee, which allows the

Party to not only infiltrate with its indirect influences for the participants selection, venues, given-forms, rules, etc. in the early stage, but also exercise discretionary power on the opinion-adoption in decision making.

In the concrete case of legislative consultation, law-making is not made exclusively at the top, but rather through a diffuse and consultative process that accounts for a diverse set of the geographical and bureaucratic constituencies within the CCP itself (Truex, 2020), during the process in which the Party Committee members are not allowed to participate in the special symposium and discuss meetings, or vote. Nevertheless, the final results still need to be resubmitted to the Party Committee for further approval before being included in the annual legislative plan. The Party's indirect influence effectively determines anything that leaders ultimately want to be passed, sometimes, unanimously. According to my interviews with the local legislators and relevant personnel, the draft legislative plan is commonly predetermined before opening to the experts and public consultation in the Huizhou's annual legislative plan from 2011 to 2018⁴⁰. The purpose of legislative consultation is only to amend some individual provisions.

In authoritarian regimes, the consultative approach is a sugarcoated strategy which is the by-product of authoritarianism maintenance. Authoritarian rulers are soberly aware that an extreme totalitarian system is becoming more difficult to sustain. They are nevertheless reluctant to truly share the ruling-power as the multi-party design is considered as a potential threat that may be brought by advanced deliberation. As Tsai and Dean (2017) explain, "the rather flexible leaning system enable the CCP learns something from the third wave democratization and Western democratic settings." Also, the handling of internalized imports is designed to ultimately serve the authoritarian ruling, which can claim its victory in terms of democratization reform. In short, the unwillingness for real deliberation with allies and rivals further contributes to the so-called institutionalized, rather regular and superficial consultations that are a tactical compromise, and which may, at least, function well in a dysfunctional civil society. This political system based on mere consultations can create 'a third way' rather than a truly deliberative transformation. This puzzle is further explained in the next section with a more general idea of national political reform.

⁴⁰Available at <http://rd.huizhou.gov.cn/pages/cms/hzrd/html/index.html>. [Accessed on 26 Mar. 2018].

4.1.2 Consultative Authoritarianism in National Political Reform

China's political reform has always been criticized for seriously lagging behind its economic developments, which is still market-oriented and aimed at strengthening the bureaucratic efficiencies and the Party's governance capacities rather than empowering ordinary citizens (He and Thøgersen, 2010). Some past leaders tried to emphasize the emergence of political reform nationally, but most failed. Some traceable clues can be found during former State Council Premier Wen Jiabao's reign with the agenda setting of political reform in China's modernization with the statement, "without political reform, such challenges as income inequalities, political system distrusts and corruptions could trigger the reappearing of the 'historical tragedies' of the Cultural Revolution"⁴¹. Unfortunately, these motivations were later stalled by dogged opposition and backlash after he left office. To note, the CCP has never concealed its aspirations for democracy. As former president Hu Jintao put it, the essence of the 'Chinese democracy' is something distinct from Western democracy and it should be a democracy with *Chinese characteristics*.

Based on the idea of Chinese-style democracy developed in Chapter Three (a combination of electoral and consultative democracy). First of all, the CCP organizes very limited consultations with its allies at regime level. For instance, proposals of CPPCC members and democratic parties in the *two sessions* ultimately create a diversified and competitive political atmosphere, but only with the law adoptions by the NPC, where CCP members occupy the majority of seats⁴². Also, major enacted legislations are marked by the CCP's self-interest even though the NPC is the legislator. Local political reforms have comparatively made strides with various participatory and deliberative settings. To seek inspirations and impetus for contemporary political reforms from the ancient consultative tradition, many authors explore resources of consultative/deliberative politics in a cultural-historical perspective. He Baogang (2011) was inspired by the interactions between

⁴¹Wen Jiabao put that the Cultural Revolution will be reappeared without real political reforms in China. Available at: <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90785/7757911.html>. [Accessed 30 Mar. 2018].

⁴²The State Council Executive Meeting usually listens to the recommendations of NPC deputies and proposals of CPPCC National Committee members about one month before the two sessions. Since 2013, the State Council has taken the lead in handling the NPC's recommendations of approximately 7,200 items per year, accounting for approximately 89% of the total recommendations; while with about 4,100 proposals of the CPPCC National Committee members, accounting for about 90% of the total proposals. Consequently, the low adoptions of the CPPCC proposals are partly due to the poorly targeted and repeated submission, for example. Nevertheless, the seemingly marginalization of the CPPCC is eroding its specialized political consultation function. Available at: http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/2020-04/29/content_5507398.htm. [Accessed 30 May. 2018].

monarchs and ministers, and the societal elites' discussion on politics in successive dynasties. The earliest ingredients of consultation 'yi (议)' in Confucianism contamination (Tan, 2014) also motivated historians (e.g. Perry, 2015; Bell, 2018) to insist upon indigenized Confucian legacies as well as the aforementioned 'mass line' in Mao's era, etc. These resources are adopted as references for current political reforms especially at regime level. Notably, they are deliberative-like but more cautious and conservative than the grassroots political reforms and ensure the CCP enjoys absolute control in the key domains.

Until the last few decades, the pioneer Jiang Zemin (1991) began to put forward the very initial political discourse of China's consultative democracy in official propaganda, and claiming that 'election and consultation are two basic democratic forms in Chinese politics'. At the beginning of this century, academic studies on consultative/deliberative democracy have flourished against the political reform agenda. Against this background, NGOs, activists and media have also gained considerable influence on the policy process, even superficially (Mertha, 2009). Following the basic evolutionary logic of consultative politics, it is designed to co-opt non-CCP elites with the firm and cautious control. The following steps are creating a democratic illusion *via* continuous formal settings for further maintaining its legitimacy without eroding the party's monopoly. It has proved to be a success that renewed and reshaped China's authoritarianism somehow.

Another important lens for the regime-level political reform is intra-party consultations, a wiser yet reluctant compromise to the Chinese democracy. They are commonly seen as a nonlegal process rather than a rigid substitution to the Party's constitution. The latter enjoys the highest effectiveness within the Party and was later confirmed via several intra-partisan documents, '*Inner-Party Supervision Regulations of the Communist Party of China (Trial)*' and '*Regulations of Disciplinary Action of the Communist Party of China*', for example. Those party rules enable the CCP to obliterate its rivals under the non-legal procedures, such as 'double designation (*shuanggui* 双规)⁴³'. Indeed, the increasing scope of intra-party debates is based on 'democratic centralism (*minzhu jizhongzhi* 民主集中制)', namely, consultative centralized decision-making and democratic collective rationalities, but it enhances the consultative

⁴³Relevant party officials are required to explain issues involved in the case at the prescribed time and venue, abbreviated as "double designation (*shuanggui* 双规)". It is the internal disciplinary process conducted by the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection of the CCP and its lower-level affiliates on members of the party who are suspected of *violations of discipline*, available at: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shuanggui>. [Accessed 12 Jun. 2019]. Legal basis of *Shuanggui* is party documents rather than the laws.

Leninism (Tsang, 2009) and facilitates the CCP's decision-making capacity, at the expense of procedural democracy.

On closer examination, even though these elements make us more optimistic about local authoritarian deliberation, it is far from the whole picture of China's local deliberative politics. Experiments conducted by He and his followers on China's local authoritarian deliberation are mainly focusing on regions with rather developed economies and forward-looking political reforms. Frankly speaking, these cases are rare and very unevenly distributed nationally. Many of these prototypes are even more likely based on personal preference. In short, it is fair to conclude that it is a win-win choice for both state and public: as for officials, they can be more politically secure by merely identifying public's policy preferences through low-cost participation and consultation; as for the depoliticized public, possible participation and involvement can effectively counteract their mutinous emotions (in the case of authentic deliberation it is not easy to achieve), and this balance can thus reduce the pressure of the regime-level political reform.

4.2 Authoritarian Consultation and Good Governance

Different types of authoritarian regimes respond differently to the democratic pressure: some collapsed while the others turned out to be dysfunctional semi-democratic regimes. Successful cases that both maintain the authoritarian nature and successfully engage in transformation with social and economic prosperities, China, for example, has been more inclined to develop a consultative and deliberative system within authoritarianism in the last decades, with no rivals and limited free media within one-party rule (He, 2010), which is quite different from some other authoritarian regimes, Singapore, for example, despite retaining authoritarian features, has nevertheless successfully cultivated a free civil society and transparent decision-making mechanisms. It is unwise to ignore these discussions on consultation just given to their non-democratic nature. A consultative approach does not merely serve as the limited governance toolkit. It also provides possibilities for a positive deliberative turn and the huge stock of consultative and deliberative experiments are more likely present in hybrid forms, they can ultimately facilitate a more systematic governmental design and provide good governance functioning simultaneously with other authoritarian means.

Consultative politics tends to be used more prudently when facing major decisions and unknowable public response. Traditional views assume a firm link between consultation and decision-making with pseudo-democracy and believe that decision-making should involve as much public participation as possible and therefore be made on the basis of full deliberation. Nevertheless, full participation and profound deliberation have always been confirmed unreachable, sometimes, counterproductive⁴⁴ in real political life. This is not merely against participation and deliberation, or simple check and balance, but a consideration of turning those normative ideas into political practice conditionally. Rather than touching the tough topic of democracy that may ultimately lead to state turmoil and party collapse, the CCP, therefore, offsets this dilemma by providing good governance with economic achievement and infrastructure construction, for example. Meanwhile, political consultation, is a means for further compelling the government to provide good service rather than a *laissez-faire* with rigid political mobilization in Soviet Union-style (Gueorguiev, 2014).

Simply put, good governance refers to a government that can provide its people with public good. Definitions are varied depending on democratic and authoritarian regimes, developed and developing states. For the latter, the good governance depends on the government's governmental capabilities (Yao, 2018), it is adopted by authoritarian rulers as an important means for further maintaining regime legitimacy instead of elective process. Commonly, various ways co-contribute to good governance, and our analysis focuses on how the public participation and consultation reshape good governance and thus provide the public good. As mentioned above, fragmentation within authoritarianism and unified political-administrative system (Yao, 2018) provide public space for citizen participation in the "public domain" in which the state and citizens interact, negotiate, and cooperate to influence the distribution of public goods that affect the livelihood and the interests of citizens. So far, little attention has been paid on how this interaction counteracts with the government's response and good governance in authoritarianism, especially with the re-centralization of political power in the recent decades that brought consultative politics to the crossroad of reform.

⁴⁴The very idea of 'more participation, more democracy' has already been revised by some authors in recent decades, even with the rather extreme proposal of an anti-participation and less-deliberation approach for further avoiding the wrangling on decision-making process; for the deliberative part, the very latest research agenda is also pursuing a more inclusive deliberative system with the incorporation of other elements, rather than a merely normative dimension.

Single case analysis may lead to different even opposite conclusions, sometimes with biased predictions. Lang (2001) therefore conducted an ambitious data analysis based on the regional experiences in local China. According to him, consultation has been a long-lasting innovation that has effectively absorbed and gradually improved the Chinese public opinion toward the democratic governance. It has performed well in four main dimensions: contributing to the democratic local governance thus giving proof of political legitimacy; helping political communications and enhancing political trusts; attracting public attention thus legitimizing decision-making process; and providing society with a cultural base of consciousness. These impetuses bring evidence for further promoting the legitimacy of the CCP. Simultaneously, some concrete countermeasures, such as the re-emphasis on the function of the United Front Work, expansion of party branches in some non-public enterprises⁴⁵, tighter network regulations and filtrations, etc. also contribute to long-lasting legitimacy maintenance by providing good governance with this consultative approach, especially in local governance. Still, we cannot expect for more regime concessions with the same response.

To highlight the consultation in authoritarian context as being a more flexible (Martin, 2013; Gueorguiev, 2014) and responsive (Beh, 2010; Weller, 2012; Hurst, 2016) way for regime adoption (Wang and Zhou, 2012) and learning, there is something new to observers. For Wang (2003), public consultation in Chinese context is described as another form of authoritarian “window-dressing” deliberately designed for distracting from real democratic reform and contributing to the prudent decision-making. This good governance is also partly captured by the CCP with the aforementioned official propaganda on ‘consultative democracy’. In this formulation, consultation is indeed regarded as a democratic form as shown in its name. Interestingly, Gueorguiev’s (2014) dissertation of *Retrofitting Communism: Consultative Autocracy in China* introduces a reasonable logic of how authoritarianism and consultation are intertwined and incorporated into each other:

...it remains understudied and theoretically discounted in the case of autocracies. This omission is understandable. The absence of electoral accountability means that an autocrat’s commitment to heed public opinion is not credible. Lack of credibility, however, does not mean that autocrats lack an interest in informing and refining their policy choices... public participation and consultation in democracies, specifically with

⁴⁵By deepening current party branches into non-public enterprises and social groups, collective information can be effectively achieved and thus facilitate the CCP’s surveillance. For more information see *Work Regulations of the Communist Party of China Branch (Trial)* (2018).

respect to information and legitimacy, and how, if at all, they translate to the authoritarian setting.

(Gueorguiev, 2014 p.36)

Notably, all these countermeasures are interpreted with the paradoxical coexisting of good governance and authoritarianism. It may be hard to swallow the facts with the disavowal of any form of authoritarian governance other than the democratic ones. According to Yu Keping (2007), a well-known Chinese intellectual and central Party advisor, democracy is a 'good thing' compatible with the CCP's Marxist-Leninist ideology and can be interpreted with a pragmatic model. "If good governance is accepted by defective democracies, semi-democracies, and authoritarian regimes, then good governance may be an optical package of democracy rather than an intermediary and device for democratic transformation" (Wu, 2010). Without giving democracy legitimated supremacy, it is only an attempt to dissolve democracy within the CCP's ideology, so that the concept of Western-style democracy no longer appears to be an indigestible idea in the Chinese official discourse. Bear this in mind, good governance provides authoritarianism with a consultative method that may allow for better performance than in democracies, and the former may be more desirable to the public than real democracy.

Another perspective of the cultivation of authoritarian civil society is Teets' (2014) profound analysis of the Chinese dysfunctional civil society and social organizations, groups and NGOs. Teets explains how governments at all levels control the fundraising, foreign connections, expansion and frontier of the public sphere with its indirect influence, and these important components of civil society survive toughly and are tamed within authoritarian institutions for further reconciling authoritarianism and good governance (see also He, 2011). In short, the features of Chinese good governance are high-economic development, administrative efficiency, effective and mighty supervision, and meritocracy politics. They bring better governance in a very pragmatic sense, albeit this process is accompanied by many criticisms. Its achievements are also obvious and highly endorsed and accepted by the public. But what we do not know is that when these *physical* evidences reach their limits, can the public still be satisfied with this good governance or the pursuit of democracy?

5 Conclusion

Obviously, the analysis in this chapter cannot exhaust all the cases in the West. Some non-mainstream and fragmented analysis should also be included for references. The ultimate goal in this chapter is to further interpret Chinese authoritarian politics from a Western perspective over various tough issues such as authoritarianism, deliberative democracy, consultative and deliberative politics, and China's political reform, etc. It is gratifying that Western Chinese studies have largely surmounted a simple democratic-authoritarian dichotomy in politics and sociology research agenda or praised China's politics from a completely intra-Western perspective based on the ignorance of China's indigenous culture, history, traditions and politics. These authors are Chinese scholars working in foreign universities or research institutions, foreign scholars and sinologists who have a rich experience and comparative thinking in Chinese studies. Chinese critics have a similar profile, and their critical thinking is contributing to a more comprehensive understanding on this volume of Chinese deliberative democracy.

A consultative and deliberative approach in Chinese politics or beyond, in the Western Chinese studies, is instrumentally adopted by the CCP for further consolidating China's authoritarian rule. These observations are based on the disappointed foresight on China's democratic future; in other words, the CCP shows no sign of interest in a competitive election-based democracy (or a 'democratic transition' as Western envisions). Nevertheless, there are some new things in these studies. Firstly, a focus on consultation and deliberation in Chinese authoritarianism softens the democratic dichotomy in Chinese political studies. For example, as 'authoritarian deliberation' indicates, deliberation in Chinese localities have limit public empowerment and very likely facilitate a bottom-up democratization without regime-level democracy. Secondly, a cultural and political diversity in deliberative democracy has expanded its scope to authoritarianism. This possible form (a coexistence of deliberation and authoritarianism) may be distinct from both the theoretical construction and practical utilization in Western democracies. Most often, such methods are adopted with a *functionalist* side (legitimacy consideration, solving practical problems, and reinforce Chinese authoritarian rule, etc.). Thirdly, although there are still consistent misunderstandings between China and the West on the ideology, civilization, political and economic system, a Western Chinese study on Chinese deliberative democracy nevertheless brings Chinese politics into the world vision.

Table 1 Comparison Table of Consultation and Deliberation in Authoritarianism

Communicative Forms	Distribution of Powers	Hierarchy	Domains	Mode of Communications
Authoritarian Deliberation	Limited Empowerment	Local (Grassroots)	Apolitical Realm (e.g. Interest Deliberation)	Quasi-Egalitarian
Authoritarian Consultation	Non-Empowerment Information Collection	Regime-Level	Key Realm (e.g. Legislative Consultation)	Concentrated, Inegalitarian

I roughly captured two main communicative and interactive forms of consultation and deliberation in Western Chinese studies. These two forms can be further distinguished in a hierarchical, geographical, and power-relation sense. For example, most of Baogang He's analyses on authoritarian deliberation are focused on Chinese grassroots, as he claims that deliberative experimentations can only be carried out at the local level with the absence of regime democracy. Besides this hierarchical analysis, it can be found that consultation and deliberation can be adopted respectively according to power relations, very likely, in some important political arenas like legislation, intra/inter party discussion, consulting for information is quite regular, while authentic deliberation can be found in autonomous local villages and urban communities. There are also geographical differences as the more developed east-coastal regions are more capable and experienced in conducting consultative and deliberative politics while the more conservative Midwest is more prudent on such a method.

Chapter Three: Indigenized Deliberative Democracy (*Xieshang Minzhu* 协商民主) in China

1 Introduction

China's integration to the world brings frequent contacts with the West. Simultaneously, misunderstanding and distrust between the two sides have occurred and lead to conflicts and even confrontations in the past two centuries. China studies conducted in Western institutions, especially in the past 70 years since the founding of the New China, were likely to appraise and predict China's future from the standpoint of a society of 'rational people' (Hobbes, 1998) and an Anglo-Saxon-style democratic polity. They tend to believe that any other political system that does not conform to Western-style democracy is doomed to fail or is later compelled to experience a democratic transition⁴⁶. Those ideas are not devoid of biases and some pragmatic authors are therefore calling for an end to this 'democratic transition' so as to better understand political changes in China. Nevertheless, this shift is not made easy by the long-lasting tendencies of Western studies on China.

Fortunately, more and more Chinese authors with a Western background or experience are making a comparative political study between China and the West possible. They constitute the backbone of the 'new left' (Xu 2003; Li, 2010) among Chinese intellectuals. They partially recognize some Western democratic doctrines, like free of speech, judicial independence, civil society cultivation, for example, and simultaneously insist on *China's characteristics*. This school is different from the completely Westernized 'liberalism' and the 'socialism with Chinese characteristics' advertised by the Chinese officials and propaganda. The second chapter provides a Western understanding of Chinese deliberative democracy, and these discussions mainly revolve around China's authoritarianism. In this chapter, an

⁴⁶Discourse on human nature is a crucial dimension of the construction of the state in the West, according to Hobbes. The proper understanding of the 'state' is first based on 'human nature', which is supposed to be the 'rational and natural individual' and the assumption of 'rational people', which are the foundations of Western political science. This interpretation may explain the individualistic economic activity well but fail to explain group-based political activities in contemporary world. On the contrary, the flourishing quantitative studies based on the 'rational individual' are detaching the political agenda from the real practice. Later, a rather unified view of 'history-theory-practice' coined by Habermas responded respectively to the simple dichotomic relation between theory and reality.

indigenized perspective is adopted for further looking into the divergences and consensus within China through a two-dimensional analysis, namely, official political discourse and academic research.

An indigenized approach argues that Chinese democracy and basic democratic forms, deliberative democracy exist in parallel and are to be distinguished from the Western democracy. Western discourse is not the only one. This indigenization should be broadly understood in its two dimensions: firstly, an academic indigenization of imported political thoughts, doctrines, concepts and so on, which have to be reconciled with and embedded in China's own political context; secondly, a political highlighting of the indigenized politics which, as often mentioned in Chinese propaganda, originate from and are created by the CCP. To date, such an indigenized process in contemporary China has roughly gone through two stages, imported from the Soviet Union after the founding of the new China in 1949, this stage of Chinese political science is mainly imitating Soviet-style politics. After the reform and opening up in 1978, the launch of the market-oriented economy facilitated the modernization of Chinese politics, and Chinese intellectuals in this stage embraced an Anglo-Saxon political science emphasizing freedom and equality.

This indigenized approach facilitates the understanding of how a Chinese-sense of deliberation (*xieshang*) or deliberative democracy (*xieshang minzhu*) has come into being. This process clearly shows how this concept has evolved along with the CCP's political tradition, as well as traditional Chinese political thoughts and culture. After this historical mapping, deliberative democracy (*xieshang minzhu*) in China has endorsed some indigenized meanings in the CCP's language and formulation. Chinese deliberative democracy is first of all presented as different from the Western version, which indicates, as in the official framing of 'consultative democracy', that an embrace of *xieshang minzhu* does not mean the CCP endorses the concept of deliberative democracy. Then, after the Eighteenth NPC, a conceptual ambiguity is gradually resolved both in the official discourse and academic discussion. Such a conception depicts another deliberative democracy image in China, with the CCP's leadership, of a more consultative political interaction and seemingly an institutionalized one.

This gradually unambiguous concept has been further reconciled with and embedded in China's democracy discourse and governance over the last two decades with its rich meanings. As defined in Chinese democracy, it is a combination of deliberation (*xieshang*) and election. This deliberation, in the very latest official explanation, is extensive, multi-

layered and institutionalized, and it includes intra/inter-party consultation and public deliberation. Another lens of deliberative governance, or a more explicit deliberative way of conducting politics, is reemphasized by the CCP in its endorsement of ‘good governance’. Through consulting and deliberating with the public, governments at all levels are more capable of delivering public good by analyzing public preferences. In other words, the authoritarian monopoly and the pragmatic utilization are still the main takeaways for looking into Chinese deliberative governance.

2 Political Science in China: Indigenization and Chinese Concepts

The reason for further highlighting an indigenization of China’s political science is not only because of China’s rising in the past three decades⁴⁷, an increase in national confidence and well-awareness of an indigenized development. More importantly, the conclusion drawn from a completely Western perspective is likely to be biased. For example, it is undoubtedly unfair to marginalize or even deny the exploration by Chinese authors of political science simply because of the lack of academic freedom under China’s authoritarianism. Although more and more authors are trying to fill these gaps, it is still far from enough. From a comparative political study perspective, it is more beneficial to dissolve this estrangement between the two camps by fully considering the studies on both.

2.1 The Recontextualization of Chinese Political Science

The internationalization and indigenization are two dialectically interacting processes of knowledge that are transferring mostly from developed to developing areas (Yan, 2005). The former is commonly adopted in sociological studies, it is a transition from an importing stage to one of authentication, by which a domestic discourse is built ‘in light of

⁴⁷China is increasingly aware of its interactions with the rest of the world, and actively participates in and tries to reshape its preexisting conceptions. Hence, a transparent *world view* is particularly important. The mainstream ‘world view’ in Chinese politics is based on the dichotomy between ‘universal world’ and ‘special China’, for a long time, both official discourses and academic discussions are concentrating on the combination of international theory with China’s practices, for instance, professor Zheng Hangsheng’s methodological ‘two-dimensional vision’, namely, ‘particular China’ is under the ‘universal world’. This analytical framework explains China’s current positioning and efforts to integrate into the world. Also, a ‘moderation’ explanation in Confucianism is usually adopted for further interpreting this process from neither overemphasizing China itself nor dilute itself as a passive component of the world.

the social, cultural, political and economic characteristics of a particular country' (Walton and Nasr, 1988). Here, I borrow this discourse and apply it in the political realm to describe a dynamic process through which China is learning from the outside world. Before the 1970s, Chinese political studies were enclosed and fragmented. Since the reform and opening up in 1978, influxes of Western liberalism plunged Chinese politics into chaos. In the first decade of the 21st century, with the enriching of comparative politics and rethinking of local politics, indigenization of Chinese politics is put on the agenda with synonyms like 'politics with Chinese characteristics (*zhongguo te'se de zhengzhi* 中国特色的政治)' and 'socialist politics (*shehui zhuyi zhengzhi* 社会主义政治)'. The reconstruction of China's politics and political science in an indigenized approach setting the backdrop for the evolution of official discourses.

2.1.1 Chinese Politics among Diversity Political Research Agenda

A division of political science into Western and Chinese types is not made here for a dichotomous purpose. On the contrary, it provides a multi-ontological and -methodological and cross-cultural interaction between China and the West. Undoubtedly, modern social sciences, including political science, originated in Europe and matured mainly both in Europe and the United States. Even now, Anglo-Saxon politics still predominates. Only in the last few decades, the late-emerging states, especially Asian countries, China, for example, have challenged this mainstream and orthodox political science with some provoking political theories. However, even the most mid-range political theories are not consequently universal with the 'scope conditions'. This motivation prompts theorists and politicians to rethink modern political science with a more inclusive and diverse perspective.

The long-lasting misunderstandings and mutual distrust between China and the West are likely to polarize the two sides. According to Alpermann (2009), these main divergences and differences in political studies are further interpreted with the qualitative (normativity) and quantitative (methodologies) diversities. Chinese political studies focus more on the macroscopical narrations compared with the scientific research in the Western political science. Methodologically, some classifications of political research approaches like behaviorism, political system theory, pluralism, interpretive theory, corporatism, feminism, rational choice theory and institutionalism are mainly borrowed from the United States

(Jing and Wang, 2009). These paradigms coexist with an assimilation and repulsion in Chinese political studies. Integrating these theories and methodologies, as well as a highlighting of the diversities and cross-cultural discourse between China and the West with an open-minded attitude compose a new trend in better understanding Chinese political richness rather than a mere dichotomy.

This prerequisite is ideologically helpful for the investigation of any single political model. Evidently, the Western political template is not fully applicable to the Chinese case. It fails to adhere to scientific standards by paying sufficient attention to the problems of scope-condition and the pitfalls of concept stretching⁴⁸. Against this background, some Chinese scholars, Deng (2008), for example, emphasized that, “it should shed the Western-centric worldview brought about by ‘Westernization’ so as to recover or rediscover ‘China’ and to create our own ideal picture of social order”. Also, as Alatas (2006) noted, “the social sciences have generally failed to take such critique to its logical conclusion, namely, the building of theories and research program that were founded on the discovery and development of non-Western categories and concepts.” An indigenous methodology is a closed, narrow-minded monism without looking into other realities; *vice versa*, imposing Western politics on China without sympathy and attempting to universalize Chinese politics is also getting nowhere.

Indigenization is based on specialization and uniqueness. This idea was lately reinterpreted by sinologist O’Brien (2011) with ‘disciplinary specialization’ and ‘topical specialization’ in China’s political studies. On the one hand, Chinese politics is being integrated into the examination of comparative politics to an extent unseen before, this view is based on some consensus, such as China’s authoritarianism. On the other hand, much of Chinese studies are usually focused on narrow topics without looking into the ‘big picture’. Students of this type are likely to adopt a high degree of topical specialization on certain issues (sometimes hoping to establish links with the bigger political environment and connecting with world politics). Yet, interest in Chinese politics is high, and this enthusiasm should call for a reflection on the rebalancing of Chinese special political studies and a generalized

⁴⁸See Mayring, P. (2002). Einführung in die qualitative Sozialforschung [Introduction to qualitative social research]. This analytical method is also adopted in the analysis of the concept of *deliberation* in divided societies and multicultural conditions. Jurg Steiner (2008) proposed concept stretching for ‘deliberation’. The massive use of deliberative democracy, especially conceptually in political science also worried authors like Sartori (1970) and Levitsky (1997). This rather arguable lens accounts for the debates between Steiner and Aavid Austen-Smith and Timothy J. Feddersen about ‘if deliberation, as a case, should stretch its conception for more’.

political research agenda, rather than with the extreme xenophobia and laissez-faire Westernization. Anyway, one cannot simply deny the increasing influence of some indigenized Chinese political theories and practices. A more challenging topic for authors inside and outside China is how to reappraisal of these phenomena more rationally, therefore reconciling Chinese studies into world political studies more fruitfully.

2.1.2 The Rising of Chinese Indigenous Theories

He (2011) thoroughly explained China's uniqueness and argued that, "an emphasis on the universalism underestimates the importance of individual unique property and on occasion justifies the dominance or intervention of one power over another in terms of defining which trends are considered to be universal". Ironically, this excessive ratification of China's uniqueness may hinder the development of Chinese politics to a certain degree, as it sometimes becomes an excuse for authoritarian regimes to thwart the democratic process by leaving behind some basic democratic rules. Still, the check-and-balance of the uniqueness and universality in the Chinese political science remains very arguable. Recently, the official propaganda for further establishing of *socialism with Chinese characteristics* (*zhongguo te'se* 中国特色) has also deepened this gap and repulsion between China and the West. In last decades, the prevailing of xenophobia, nationalism and anti-globalization in world politics also lead to a regression in this inseparable and interdependent system. This can also be seen in contemporary China, with the idea that China should maintain firmly its uniqueness by rejecting the Western pitfall that is commonly seen in both official and academic discourses.

Western political theories and practices are heavily embedded in its traditions and cultures, but some tested and verified theories contribute to a long-lasting influence worldwide. These legacies should not be underestimated, or simply rejected merely due to China's uniqueness. Rather than assuming an exclusive Chinese model and arbitrarily simplifying the relationship between uniqueness and universalism, we should reexamine indigenous theories in contemporary China for further rethinking the indigenization of Chinese political science in the last three decades. Albeit China faces free speech problems, which reflects on academia with some cheerleading research with little criticism, these indigenized theories are by no means obsequious truisms lacking academic thinking. Instead, they

correspond to consistent and collective efforts to facilitate the development of Chinese political thoughts (Zhang, 2017) as time-tested theories.

As for deliberative democracy, officials and most domestic authors believe strongly that it is an original creation of the socialist democracy with *Chinese characteristics*. After a historical mapping, it has never been a Western exotic product. Their analysis begins with an appraisal of traditional Chinese culture and politics: for example, ancient emperors sympathizing to their people, consulting state affairs with their ministers, etc. (those ideas are criticized for lacking any democratic ingredient in a modern sense). Furthermore, as much as the cooperation with the Kuomintang after the CCP's establishment during the Anti-Japanese War from 1924-1927 and the 'triangular system (*sansan zhibi* 三三制)' were the tactics for against Chiang Kai-shek's one-party dictatorship in 1927, the newly established CPPCC system is further aimed at explaining what the indigenized resources for Chinese deliberative democracy discourse are. Undoubtedly, there are many conceptual ambiguities and misuses due to a different understanding of deliberation and deliberative democracy. Nevertheless, such an indigenized and reconstructed process explains what and how this discourse can be in Chinese political context.

These indigenized theories are not limited to the political realm, but politics in China is still the predominant and sensitive discipline so far. In the earlier 2000s, some Chinese scholars with foreign learning backgrounds or international perspectives began to rethink this indigenization of Chinese politics by building connections with the West with a batch of Chinese social science departments. As a matter of fact, these endeavors have only achieved very little. Firstly, some indigenized political theories in China are not widely recognized and accepted by world academia; simultaneously, the developments of Chinese political science are strictly monopolized by the Party's ideology. For example, in Xi's era, the school of Marxism is established in all Chinese universities and as the core discipline for further facilitating an ideological penetration⁴⁹.

In short, to further distinguish those indigenized theories, a more objective explanation may be, in the political realm, that they refer to the indigenized (a more popular rubric of '*zhongguohua* 中国化') Western political theories, which after being introduced in China, incorporate Chinese local practices, cultures and histories. They are sometimes coined by

⁴⁹Through statistical studies of those academic papers published in China's largest academic website of 'Chinese National Knowledge Infrastructure, CNKI'. Topics or subjects, as well as various social science funding with Xi Jinping thoughts have shown a linear growth in recent years.

some Chinese authors (e.g. Zhang, 2014; Li, 2015, 2018) with the *Chinese exceptionalism*. Commonly, this indigenization process highlights the awakening of national consciousness. In the Indian context, it is called ‘vernacularization’, which interprets with a process which can not be reduced to neutral translation. It inscribes a concept or an idea elaborated in a specific frame (in present cases, the international academia that is dominated by the Anglo-American literature and written in the English lingua franca) in another local cognitive frame, giving it new significations. In this sense, those indigenized political theories in a way contribute to an internal understanding of China’s politics and further open a window for the outside observers’ insights.

2.2 Evolution and Reappraisal of the Chinese Discourse on Democracy (*Minzhu* 民主)

Both mainstream Western deliberative democracy discourse and China’s official framing of *xieshang minzhu* connect deliberation with democracy somehow, even if this link is unconsolidated. This trend indicates a central focus of the intertwined relation between deliberation and democratic studies. The concept of democracy has not been linked to Chinese authoritarianism for a long time. To date, Chinese-style democracy discourse is still regarded by some Western democrats as a pseudo-doctrine. Whether it is an ideological or civilizational incompatibility, or the conflict between Western liberal democracy and Chinese indigenized democratic framing, it is impossible to grasp Chinese politics without disengaging these intertwined relations amongst these discourses. In this part, I therefore revisit the Chinese democratic discourses within several camps, to first, understand what Chinese democracy means; and secondly, to compare with the Western liberal democracy.

2.2.1 Chinese Alternative Democratic Discourse -‘Minzhu’ 民主

The last three decades have witnessed the strengthening of China’s national power, especially its increasing economy, as well as its international discourse power. The rather paradoxical conception of ‘Chinese democracy’ has prompted many authors to wonder what Chinese democracy is, rather than making a superficial assessment, what is the difference with the Western democracy, and then what is the paradoxical coexistence of democracy and authoritarianism. Chinese democracy is far from a mature thing both in conception and practice in contemporary Chinese political science. It nevertheless

constitutes a plural understanding on democratic studies. As Chi (2020) defends, democratic discourses not only refer to liberal democracy in the West, they also include other democratic types.

Before further considering these discussions in a broader Chinese context, a brief historical combing of the general democratic idea with its evolution is necessary. For the notion of ‘democracy’, many meanings have been attached to it and endowed with since it was first proposed, and this ‘most promiscuous word’ (Crick, 2002) has been continuously evolving and changing. The Athenian democracy introduced an oligarchic constitution that permits self-government by the citizenry with direct participation. Nevertheless, slaves, women and outsiders were marginalized, and officials were drawn by lot, but political decisions were ruled by the majority. This political structure was outlined in the Roman constitutionalism-based governance, with an introduction of some democratic-like settings. However, it was still not designed as an aristocratic republic, but an oligarchy; subsequently, various forms of parliaments appeared in some regions. Iceland, Italy, France, Switzerland, for example, they adopted restrictions to imperial and religious power, etc. Nevertheless, parliaments were controlled by the nobles and without legislative powers and functions.

In a more modern view, the Renaissance and Humanitarian Movement explored a non-religious society by rethinking the ancient Greek concept of democracy. Many democratic attempts and experiments enriched ‘democracy’ both normatively and empirically, such as the concept of ‘republican politics’ adopted by the United States in the 1760s and 1790s and during French Revolution in 1789 to 1799. In the last century, the two world wars also brought light to representative democracy in the West. The masterpiece of *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Huntington, 1993) also indicated a coexistence of veteran democracies and authoritarian polities. Huntington thus explained the epochal, historical and even geographical differences of democracies.

Back to China, another different path of democratic development once again confirmed the diversity of democratic concepts. Democracy is a very recent concept in China, at least, linguistically and rhetorically. Many Chinese authors seek recourses to Chinese democracy in ancient Confucianism and some other traditions. Nevertheless, they may serve as references but far more the whole picture of Chinese democracy in the modern sense. To make it clear, in this part, I thus first explore the democratic connotations of the ‘Three

People's Principles'⁵⁰, namely, nationalism, democracy, the people's livelihood in the early last century and its subsequent evolutions, as well as the 'New Democracy' at the beginning of the founding of New China, these two main segments portray the very bedstone of democratic discourse in modern China. Also, several mainstream democratic concepts and forms are summarized and reexamined to better distinguish Chinese democracy from Western discourses with different democratic paradigms.

Unfortunately, the Three People's Principles fail to depict China's democratic blueprint. Nonetheless, this doctrine provides many inspirations for contemporary Chinese democratic discourses. Among many explanations⁵¹, traceable clues can be found in some pioneers' thoughts. For example, Sun Yat-sen's democratic thoughts indicated several discursive dimensions with good governance (sometimes interpreted with 'good form of government', a strong and united state is the guarantee for people's livelihood), people-oriented principle (*minben* 民本), elitism (the minority bourgeoisie as the leading class), and instrumentalism (e.g. government can be used as a tool for creating intellectual resources). Nevertheless, Sun was not unleashed from China's authoritarian legacies, he still expected to provide good governance under authoritarianism to achieve democracy⁵². Many criticized Chiang Kai-shek for his authoritarian thoughts and practices. His democratic contributions (if any) were referred to Taiwan's democratic discourse, and Chiang goes further on democratic constitutionalism. Rather than assuming a strong state, he also reemphasized an institutionalized elitist decision making that⁵³ was written constitutions and procedures.

Chiang Ching-kuo's main contributions mainly focused on Taiwan, and some of his democratic thoughts (e.g. underlining rule of law) facilitated the democratization of the Confucian community. The early Three People's Principles and its evolutions indicated the Chinese people's explorations of democracy. The later Communists also learned some

⁵⁰Sun Yat-sen proposed the 'Three Principles of the People (*sanmin zhuyi* 三民主义)'. His followers, mainly Chiang Kai-shek and Chiang Ching-kuo, further developed and enriched its meaning on this basis.

⁵¹Due to the hostile position of mainland of China and Taiwan, the understanding and interpretation of the Three People's Principles is quite different, sometimes even opposite, especially for this *democracy* doctrine. For example, mainland authors critically noted the bourgeois character of Sun's democratic understanding and sought to link Sun's Principle of the People's Welfare to China's economic policies (see Lorenzo, 2013). Nevertheless, the rather weak bourgeois failed to establish the Western-style democratic constitutional system, and also failed to represent the public.

⁵²Mao proposed the New Three People's Principles (or a reinterpretation of the old one) in *On New Democracy* (1940), namely, three major policies of allying with the Soviet Union and the CCP, helping the farmers and workers, but this discourse is more in line with the propaganda in anti-Japanese national united front.

⁵³See Address to the Kuomintang Work Conference, August 1, 1980, Perspectives, 30-31.

lessons from those democratic ideas and conducted a new round of experimentations in mainland China. More precisely, the very discourse of ‘New Democracy’ before the socialism transition shed light to some basic democratic ideas in contemporary China. Mao’s interpretation of New Democracy established a new political system in the semi-colonial and -feudal China, which distinguished both the Anglo-American capitalist republic and socialist states like Soviet Union based on the dictatorship of the proletariat. The three core dimensions of ‘united front’, ‘armed struggle’ and ‘party building’ and some derived ideas set the tone of Chinese democratic discourse. For instance, the United Front Work paved the way for the CPPCC’s⁵⁴ establishment and the further repositioning of democratic parties as participatory parties⁵⁵ and reshaped the basic political party system. These democratic legacies, on the one hand, drew inspirations from the Chinese traditions, mainly Confucianism, and gave way to another democratic discourse different from the West. On the other hand, they provided resources for contemporary Chinese discussions on democracy. At best, these early explorations exclude some ‘astray’ options for China’s democratic envision in a trial-and-error method. It is rather fair to conclude that Chinese democratic discourses did not bring the democratic prospects expected by Western democrats (e.g. a fundamental democratization or collapse).

A rough division of Chinese democracy that is based on the acceptance of Western liberalism can lead to the aforementioned three mainstream democratic schools, namely, democracy with Chinese characteristic, liberalism and the New Left (Lu and Shi, 2015; see also Li, 2015). The discourse of democracy with *Chinese characteristics* present in the official propaganda is more limited in the ideological spectrum⁵⁶ compared with the Western model of liberal democracy (Shi, 2008; Chu, 2011) and third-world authoritarianism (Lynch, 2007; Cho, 2009; Taylor and Carolina, 2010). He and Kong (2011) explain that, “...there are two sets of democratic discourses in the contemporary world, one is the individualistic

⁵⁴See Preface to the Common Program of the People’s Political Consultative Conference.

⁵⁵A more radical yet critical view on Mao’s New Democracy refers to the deviation on Marx and Lenin’s discourse on democracy. For Marx, there is no other state form than the proletarian regime in the transition between capitalism and communism (also see Lenin’s “State and Revolution”). Mao’s so-called ‘third way’, named New Democracy, first of all, goes against Marx’s statements on the relation between the state and the people in the ‘Critique of the Gotha Program’ by linking the two within the ‘people’s republic’ state. Also, Mao’s understanding of the ‘people’ refers to the workers, peasants, petty bourgeoisie and proletariat, the ‘people’s republic’ is established based on the ‘people’ coalition. However, according to Marxist ‘class struggle’, the contradictions between the proletariat and bourgeoisie are irreconcilable, thus, the democracy based on this coalition is also fragile.

⁵⁶Shi (2008) demonstrated that China’s democracy is a guardianship discourse that inherited some ideas from the Confucianism. Different from some core elements in liberal democracy, for instance, open and fair political contests, this recognition for democracy also constitutes the main sources of the CCP’s legitimacy.

liberal democracy in the West, while another is Marxist Chinese-style democracy”. This indigenized democratic discourse is rather prudent on political reform but content with adopting more peaceable alternative approaches (e.g. good governance, rule of law) to interpret democracy.

The official discourse on democracy interprets it as something belonging *to* the people, which signifies that the government should govern *for* the people (by elites), rather than *by* the people (Shi and Lu, 2010). This logic explains the very paradox between the Party’s legitimacy and non-elected cadres’ claim to represent the public’s basic interests. It can be further confirmed in the political discourses of each generation of leaders, from Jiang Zemin’s “Three Represents (*sange saibiao* 三个代表)’ where the CCP always represents the fundamental interests of the majorities; Hu Jintao’s conception of scientific development (*kexue fazhanguan* 科学发展观); and recent Xi Jinping’s socialism with *Chinese characteristics* (*zhongguo te’she shehui zhuyi* 中国特色社会主义). The CCP’s 18th National Congress in 2012 also proclaimed that the *people’s democracy* is the lifeblood of socialism, so as to conceptualize socialist democracy with a non-elected party and further distinguish it from liberal democracy.

Liberals embrace a Western-style democracy and its core principles; that is, competitive elections, limited government and independent judiciary. These dogmas can only be further achieved through fundamental political reforms. Their claims are based on the criticism of the current authoritarian one-party system and the unveiling of the hypocrisy of democracy with *Chinese characteristics*. After the controversy between liberals and new authoritarians⁵⁷ in the 1980s, and the division of moderates and conservatives within the liberal camp in the 1990s, the New Left emerged on the basis of Western left-wing socialist ideologies, with the rethinking of the liberal democracy. New Leftists reject total Westernization and are skeptical of the electoral representative system. They hope to build a democratic discourse with a reflection on the defects of the Western democracy, for instance, the weak *state capacity* proposed by Wang and Hu (2001), who indicate that a strong central government is conducive to the stability of the market-oriented economy. The New Left also encourages public democratic participation in politics with greater empowerment to highlight the people’s democracy.

⁵⁷New authoritarianism highlights political stability and advocates using gradual and enlightened authoritarianism to lead the modernization and economic development in China, which was latter coined as ‘good authoritarianism’ by some authors (e.g. Roy, 1994; Heurlin, 2016).

This rather horizontal appraisal on some mainstream democratic discourses is helpful for the general understanding of the contemporary Chinese democracy. More precisely, these concrete doctrines also reveal their democratic features in a way that combines tradition and modernity. For instance, in Bell's (2016) book *The China model: Political meritocracy and the limits of democracy*, an alternative political discourse on meritocratic governance and democracy both in China and Singapore was formed to explain the very unique model of 'democracy at the bottom, experimentations in the middle, and meritocracy at the top'. Grassroots democracy refers to the local autonomy and cadres' election in the recession of local empowerments⁵⁸; the middle-level experiments indicate a multi-pronged reform in economy, administration, society, and politics, which Heilmann (2008) called "experiment under hierarchies". This meritocratic democracy and derived good governance is also a key feature of Chinese democracy, which adopts a non-electoral approach to demonstrate its superiority.

These discourses have brought many possibilities for the definition and concept of Chinese democracy, nevertheless, such discussions should not only be limited to the Confucian community in Asia. They should constitute a broader world democratic discourse system and conversation. Evidentially, there is not a single and unique model to understand Chinese democracy, with careful revisiting of some Chinese traditional thoughts and values. A reappraisal of Chinese-style democracy is therefore conducive to the understanding of both the special issue of democracy and Chinese politics.

2.2.2 A Reappraisal of 'Chinese-Style Democracy'

It is premature to make a definite conclusion on Chinese-style democracy, this original thinking should be further precipitated. Such a discourse has experienced collisions with mainstream Western democracy, and underwent a rough indigenized process. Li (1996) wrote that, "conceptually, democracy in its Chinese incarnation is a mixture of many elements that inherited from Chinese history and lifted out of the Western democratic discourse." Thus, the formulation of Chinese democracy as an alternative also indicates its unorthodox and nonmainstream nature, which has not been accepted and recognized by

⁵⁸For instance, some authors (He, 2017; Chi, 2019) conclude that a lack of real political power in Chinese grassroots make many villages 'floating villages', inside which the Party Branch monopolizes the local autonomous power rather than the elected village head.

the West to date. Faced with this dilemma, this newly packaged democracy with *Chinese characteristic* is regarded as a provocation. Albeit Liberals and some New Leftists are reluctant to accept this discourse, the mainstream democratic idea (mainly in the official and academic discourse), especially re-inspired by Xi's (2016) 'Four Confidences'⁵⁹, this democracy with *Chinese characteristic* reveals the CCP's ambitions to facilitate China's grand democratic blueprint.

The flourishing intellectual reinterpretations of this official democratic discourse also shed light and contribute to the solid understanding on this issue. For instance, Lu and Shi (2015) explained the coexistence of various democratic concepts in a quantitative analysis. These discourses differentiate rhetorically very bewildering rubrics (not for liberals). In essence, they confirm another prospect of democracy that under authoritarianism and thus pose a challenge to liberal democratic discourses. This new form of democracy should not be underestimated. That said, both Western democrats (e.g. Frenkiel, 2015; Hietanen, 2018) and domestic intellectuals of different schools have different interpretations of Chinese democracy. Nonetheless, it is still important to look into what democracy with *Chinese characteristic* stands for, and investigate whether this unique model reconciling meritocratic governance within one-party rule without regarding election as its priority can justify itself and compete with Western liberal democracy?

Alternative democratic discourses are not simple rhetorical racket, but potentially valuable insights for further reflecting upon some issues that are inherent to democratic societies (Hietanen, 2018). The battle of ideas and discourses on democracy in contemporary China indicates the maintenance of authoritarianism without turning to a true democracy. This choice account for the main source of legitimacy for the ruling party. Lu and Shi's (2015) observations and statistical analysis provide a domestic lens: Chinese people still have a high recognition of the democratic values that the Communist Party instilled, so as to shape the public's democratic conceptions and ensure the internal stability. More precisely, those alternatives ease the pressure of pursuing the Western-style democracy with the public's obedience.

Two dimensions are highlighted when reappraising Chinese democracy as conclusions. First, particularities of China's democratic discourse cannot conceal its non-democratic

⁵⁹The 'Four Confidences', namely, the path, theory, system and culture confidence, were proposed by president Xi Jinping at the celebration of the 95th anniversary of the founding of the Chinese Communist Party, this new formulation is derived from the 'Three Confidences' in the 18th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party.

side, and the derived administrative efficiency, public reorganization, and economic development are insufficient to substitute for further democratic political reforms. Nevertheless, what is quite certain is that China's political reforms should always be prudent given the fragmentation of the resilience and balance in authoritarianism; second, a comparative political analysis among various democratic discourses should be put on the agenda rather than being merely emphasized. For instance, the recent promotion of intra-party democracy is considered by some authors as a sign of democratic transformation (Guo, 2003), which ensures that democratic handling is monopolized by a gradual and orderly process, and guarantees that democracy can be conceptually and procedurally safe for China. Meanwhile, meritocratic politics can ensure that the most capable people are being appointed and promoted, avoiding the disorder and chaos brought about by the rigmarole election. All these rules can guarantee a relatively comparative advantages of Chinese democracy in the sense of good governance.

According to Lu and Shi (2015), Chinese democracy emphasizes the indispensability of having virtuous and competent political leaders by intentionally downplaying the role of institutions/procedures, particularly those that may constrain the discretionary power of the political leaders to follow their vision for advancing the public interest. These key features neatly avoid the indispensable factors of liberal democracy, such as political institutions, basic democratic settings, etc. Nevertheless, always bear in mind that the two-dimensional appraisal of Chinese democracy is fresh and beyond a merely rigid and normative conceptual analysis. It indicates another image of what democracy means to authoritarian China and how the public's ideas on democracy were shaped among those alternative discourses, thus concluding that democracy is never a fixed answer.

3 From “*Xieshang* 协商” (Consultation/Deliberation) to *Xieshang Minzhu* 协商民主 (Consultative/Deliberative Democracy)

3.1 Ordinary Deliberation (*Xieshang* 协商) in China

Similar to the development of democracy in China, the term of ‘deliberation’ has also gradually transitted from a daily expression to a rather professional notion, such as political

deliberation. Nevertheless, the rather chaotic correspondence between Chinese and other languages has triggered many ambiguities and sometimes misinterpretations and misuses in the comparative study. For the colloquialisms, some expressions like ‘*shangliang/xieshang* 商量/协商 (negotiation /deliberation)’, ‘*taolun* 讨论 (discussion)’, ‘*woxuan* 斡旋 (mediation)’, ‘*taojia huanjia* 讨价还价’ (bargaining), as well as some others in various dialects are all nuanced with a modern sense of ‘deliberation’. They consistently reinterpret the *deliberation* concept and behavior logic in public sphere. Still, this perspective presents an apolitical and nonprofessional aspect of deliberation. When deliberation is given specific meanings or applied to certain realms, such as administrative and legislative deliberation, deliberation is more manifest in the political and professional sense, or else, they may refer to public deliberation in an apolitical sense. Thus, this two-dimensional perspective explains both the (a)political deliberation from an indigenized approach and contributes to a domestic understanding of Chinese deliberation and deliberative democracy.

3.1.1 Chinese Concepts of Public Deliberation

The more general idea of public deliberation is far less systematic and formal than the official interpretations and academic discussions. The former is more like a summary of the daily behavior with the traditional and cultural inheritances, Confucianism, for example. Thus, a comprehensive understanding of the Chinese general idea of deliberation can facilitate the authoritarian governance continuum with its broad support from the public. To begin with, China’s rich Confucian legacy can provide inspirations. Unsurprisingly, the revival of Confucianism⁶⁰ in recent decades has been praised highly as a national icon of China’s traditional culture, as well as a symbol of the Party’s concerns for the public welfare. It is also this reemphasis that facilitates a way to study some indigenized resources on the public’s deliberative thinking and behavior.

Efforts to summarize the Chinese people’s concept of deliberation are sometimes vain, given that the rather abstract public deliberative idea is difficult to capture via scientific and quantitative methodologies⁶¹. Nevertheless, these ambitious attempts to extract a more

⁶⁰Synonyms like the ‘revival’, ‘return’, and ‘prosperity’ of Confucianism are all indicated this doctrine that in the form of ‘intellectual enterprises’ after the iconoclastic Maoist episode, is regarded as a philosophical reference for exploring the Chinese cultural and traditional origins by the official, academia and the public.

⁶¹Albeit many authors have already contributed to this realm on Chinese people’s understanding of deliberation by both theoretical and empirical analysis, case studies, for example. They are very uneven in scope and effectiveness, this

general idea of public understanding on deliberation via drawing the inspirations from Chinese traditions, as well as abundant case studies can explain partly how the public shapes their understanding of deliberation and how an indigenized idea of deliberation developed among the public. As already mentioned, firstly, Chinese everyday language provides various synonyms of deliberation. Those popular expressions are in accord with the daily social communications and indicate a *special* approach to deliberation. For instance, the more popular ‘honest talk’ that indicates heart-to-heart communication, as elsewhere in the Chinese culture of deliberation, it contains reason-giving and persuasion ingredients. Liang (1979) thus argues that ‘substantive reason’ in Chinese public deliberation is even more important than the instrumental forms that based on the proposed idea of ‘communicative rationality’.

Empirical study offers another more practical perspective for further understanding public deliberation. Combining a large stock of case studies and my observations in Chapter Five, three justifications are thus underlined: firstly, how *deliberative* Chinese public deliberation can be. Some linguistic expressions and traditional thoughts indicate a strong disposition for considered judgements such as “think three times before taking action” (*sansi erxing* 三思而行), or make a “careful consideration” (*shengsi shulv* 深思熟虑) (He, 2013), public dialogues and communications that are even more reason-giving and rational, based on Confucian conservative culture. Secondly, the deliberative capacity linking rational *and* well-educated (communicative capacities) individual with the superior deliberative capacities in public deliberation remains questionable. Case analysis indicates that when the public is engaged in discussions or deliberations involving their own interests, they will argue for reasons. Nevertheless, these reasons are not necessarily based on their deliberative abilities. Thirdly, plural types of communication exhibit another deliberative model that features pragmatism (problem-solving-oriented and functionalist-driven), compromise deliberation (avoiding direct confrontation), non-legal settlement deliberation (private settlement). This summary is helpful for a better understanding of public deliberation in an everyday sense.

These linguistic vernacular thesaurus or synonyms and rather empirical evidence accord well with Mansbridge’s (1999) idea of *everyday talk*, proposed as part of the deliberative system. This more general lens has lately been confirmed by other studies that indicated how everyday talk can be conceptualized as a component of this system and how the public

evidence may somehow fail in credibility and persuasion, nevertheless, such scholarships provide a multi-faceted perspective on the deeper understanding of public deliberative ideas in contemporary China.

constructs the concept of the self and the other beyond the structured deliberation in institutional settings. As a result, the idea of Chinese public deliberation inherited from China's Confucian tradition further constitutes a deliberative type, inside of which mainly certain issues and policies with strong instrumentality are discussed, and private interests are commonly presented⁶². Nevertheless, such kind of deliberation is generally conducted privately in non-normative and non-institutional fashion, sometimes with the intervention of mediators and intermediaries. This hybrid model with both emotional catharsis and reason-giving coexists with some modern means of deliberative thinking and practice.

3.1.2 Deliberative Logic among the Chinese Public

Commonly, this conceptual understanding of deliberation among the Chinese public has reshaped their deliberative logic in everyday life, which is present not only in the formal participation and deliberative institutions, but more likely in the deliberative behavior and logic in a quite restrictive public sphere. Tracible clues can be found in the observation of public interactions, role-playing, behaviors, and ways of thinking during the deliberative process. This endogenous behavioral logic is the daily practice of normative deliberation. Many political theorists have justified what these informal and unstructured deliberative ideas and basic behavioral logic look like, with the description of 'a mixture of argument, rhetoric, emotion, testimony or storytelling, and gossip' -rather than being limited to the rational exchange of reasons (e.g. Dryzek, 2000; He, 2012). This variety can be further interpreted as a reflection of cultural diversity in different political contexts.

Discussions on public deliberation in Chinese context may not be what observers hoped and expected, that deliberations should be conducted in a fairly public sphere with equality and mutual respect, where participants' participation is based on sole *reason* and where they act for the common good. Nevertheless, the Chinese public act with their own deliberative logic. A two-dimensional analysis is further given to analyze these public interactions and

⁶²The 'deliberative system' proposed by many may risk loosely defining deliberation with its synonyms, given that this idea broadens the understandings of the frontiers of deliberation, especially when modern political scholarship takes the individual self-interests, reason-like expressions (rhetoric, emotion) and everyday talks in such a system seriously. As a systemic design indicates, all these components are complementary and function together in a deliberative system. I posit that deliberation amid the Chinese public (informal and unstructured) with its everyday communication can be *deliberative* because there exist various communicative and interactive forms and this variety covers a wide range as 'a potential component in a deliberative system'. Deliberations are captured and reconciled in these public interactions and communications.

communication between and among the (un)structured and (in)formal deliberative spheres. The higher hierarchy of deliberative institutions, the more stringent limits are imposed on the participants, and *vice versa*. For example, for the C/LPPCC's annual proposal, Yu (2015) unveiled the patterns of the CPPCC delegates' deliberative behavior by analyzing 648 delegate-submitted proposals on the 11th CPPCC, and thus came to the conclusion that "delegates skillfully utilize this forum as a channel to advance group and personal interests, at the same time cautiously and tactfully conforming to those hidden rules that discouraged them from taking on politically incendiary issues...political proposals remain scarce." This deliberative logic indicates the pursuit of individual/group advantages and avoidance of disadvantages in hierarchical deliberations.

For the proposals concerning sensitive topics, such as politics, legislation, the CPPCC members are deviating from their main political functions with only some apolitical proposals. For instance, legislative proposals proposed by the CPPCC members are rarely influencing the NPC's annual legislative plan (unless strong social dissatisfactions are expressed)⁶³. The NPC's solid legislative position, as well as the CCP's indirect influence often lead to a unanimous vote for the final policy making. The process is similar in the local regulation making (as interpreted in the empirical analysis in chapter five). This rather formalized deliberation in higher hierarchy usually presents prudent and hypocritical deliberative (in most cases, it can be just consultative) influence.

This perspective explains the official intentions of institutionalizing deliberation in its propaganda. Higher-hierarchical institutionalization of deliberation brings a thinner chance of authentic and equal deliberation. Deliberators need to be more careful and are likely to suffer from constrained freedom of speech in such occasions. Also, the Confucian political culture favoring more compromise and moderation is not inclined to face-to-face criticisms, which renders deliberations usually superficially presented. Different and opposite opinions are more likely to be made behind curtains. This behavioral logic gives

⁶³According to the available records, there are very few cases that indicate a direct influence on the NPC annual legislative plan by the proposals from the CPPCC members or NPC representatives. For instance, in March 2008, Ma Kening, a NPC representative formally submitted a proposal calling for the abolition of the 'reeducation through labor system (*laodong jiaoyang zhidu* 劳动教养制度)', and argued that this State Council's administrative regulation on reeducation system seriously violated the Chinese Constitution and the Legislative Law. Additionally, strong public dissatisfaction with this inhuman and illegal system further contributed to the abolishment of this 50-year-old reeducation system. This legislative concession was regarded as the response to the indignant public as well as their potential uprising, even though these cases were rare.

much chance on some under-the-table interactions and communications between and among the participants.

Lower-level and more informal deliberation is more motivated and unregulated (grassroots deliberation is discussed in the fifth chapter). These practices are considered to be more deliberative, with deliberators treated more equally in a fair and loosely controlled public sphere. Gastil, Black and Moscovitz (2008) explain that, “communicative features such as adequate opportunity to speak, rights to comprehend, obligation to consider the others’ opinions, and respect for all...those ingredients are more common in the informal settings.” There may be nuances in the public’s concept of deliberation and behavior after the introduction of some modern deliberative methods and institutions. Nevertheless, with the persistence of cultures and customs, this model is hybrid in a way that combines both tradition and modernity.

In a nutshell, before the concepts of Western deliberation and deliberative democracy were introduced into China, deliberative thinking had preexisted in both Chinese concepts and practices. These discourses were inherited from the Confucian legacies of democracy, politics, society, and morality, even in modern times. These influences were still subtle in Chinese deliberative democracy discourse, which also constantly reshaped the public’s deliberation concepts and behavior. More recently, when the Western deliberative idea collided with Chinese deliberative discourse, the latter began to incorporate some democratic ingredients and evolve into a more hybrid type. This explanation further consolidates a domestic understanding of deliberative democracy.

3.2 Political Consultation/Deliberation (*Xieshang* 协商) and Consultative/Deliberative Democracy (*Xieshang Minzhu* 协商民主)

The ‘two track deliberative model’ proposed by Jürgen Habermas (1996) takes both of the political and public deliberation into consideration. I thus follow this track by focusing on the more political deliberative discourse evolution after the aforementioned public deliberation, as well as the modern discourse on ‘deliberative democracy’. This political analysis explains why the political consultation and deliberation and deliberative

democracy are inherited from Chinese traditional Confucianism legacies and make sense in Chinese politics.

3.2.1 Political Consultation/Deliberation and Confucian Origins

The very idea of Confucian deliberation proposed by many authors (e.g. Lyon, 2004; Chen, 2006; He, 2014, 2016) in recent decades partially explains the relationship between elite deliberation and people-oriented governance in contemporary China⁶⁴. For example, amongst these doctrines, the ‘moderation (*zhongyong* 中庸)⁶⁵ in Confucianism advocates a rebalance of state policies from extremism, within which deliberators are assumed to be ‘gentleman (*junzi* 君子)⁶⁶ with indispensable morality. More precisely, Confucian deliberation ultimately leads to the fair conclusion of people-oriented politics beyond voting and democratic empowerment, compared with the “adversarial politics associated with the competitive election or an individualistic conception of human rights, deliberation travels more easily in Confucianism”. Ancient emperors were also obliged to consult ministers before making policy decisions, which became a favorable way for checking against tyrants, avoiding mistaken political decisions, and developing policies in favour of people’s interest (He, 2014) in the successive dynasties.

The change of Chinese dynasties revealed the consistent uprisings and societal unrests brought by unrestricted power and monarchal misbehavior. To avoid those grievances, top-down dialogues are therefore considered an indispensable tool to avoid the regime’s overthrow. Against this background, historical moral codes served as cultural principles

⁶⁴I adopt the formulation of ‘Confucian deliberation’ that is summarized in many authors’ works to further explain a cultural origin of Chinese deliberative democracy. Undoubtedly, the contemporary Chinese discourse has inherited many concepts and ideas from Confucianism. In other words, its Confucian origin constitutes a cultural and traditional resource of deliberative democracy with *Chinese characteristics* and it conversely shapes the Chinese people’s democratic understanding. Nevertheless, I am still skeptical of the compatibilities between traditional Confucianism and modern deliberation and how this paradox can be reconciled within the new official and academic interpretations.

⁶⁵The idea of eclecticism and equilibrium explains why Confucianism is more popular and acceptable than other ancient Chinese doctrines like Taoism, Mohism, and Legalism. Meanwhile, the strict ethical standard and hereditary power system in Confucianism laid a more solid foundation and impetus for the authoritarian governance continuum. Albeit Confucianism did not question the hereditary divisions, it did acknowledge and emphasize that the public is partly made up of noble origin and has the right to participate in politics and deliberation, despite its elitism.

⁶⁶The Concept of *junzi* constitutes the core component of Confucianism. Confucius endorsed firmly the feudal hierarchy but Confucianism emphasized that the monarchy should lead by example and guarantee morality. Confucius concludes that political success or failure depends on ‘morality’ rather than ‘force’. Compared with the modern idea of rule of law in the West, ‘moral governing’ is a rich legacy of Chinese politics. Also, according to John King Fairbank’s book of *China Tradition and Change*, a gentleman must have two qualities: ‘literature (education or modification)’ and ‘martial arts (in respect of proper understanding and social customs)’, which also explains why the gentleman and morals are inextricably linked.

and norms for deliberation and deliberative democracy both in ancient dynasties and contemporary Chinese politics. According to He (2013), these moral codes include normative ranking, the principle of publicity and subjugation of self-interest to public-mindedness. Simply put, normative ranking refers to the governance that should follow an ordinal morality-reason-might order (Cheng, 2006). Moral governance is still prevailing in contemporary Chinese politics; moral-based deliberation should be carried out on the premise of ‘common good’ pursuit in the public sphere⁶⁷; for the last code, Confucian deliberation advocates self-interests. Nevertheless, this pursue of self-interest should subordinate to the collective interests.

Many Sinologists and Confucian admirers (e.g. Lyon, 2004; Min, 2009; Tan, 2014) seek inspirations from Confucianism to justify ‘Confucian deliberation’. For instance, they think dialogues between and among emperors and ministers can be regarded as early deliberation for modern Chinese deliberative politics. This idea remains questionable. Confucianism defends hierarchical feudalism, and the consultation/deliberation is carried out in a state of inequality. In other words, this political balance is tilted to the emperor. Interestingly, in the various modern political deliberative forms, for instance, the intra- and inter party-deliberation, equal deliberations are still unthinkable between the CCP and the other democratic parties (participatory parties). Nevertheless, it is very true that current Chinese political deliberation under authoritarianism inherited these legacies. More precisely, moderation, morality and pragmatism-orient deliberation, and to this sense, modern Chinese political deliberation is compatible with the Confucianism pedigree.

Another important perspective is the Confucian people-oriented (*minben* 民本) doctrine. Although the power of emperors under authoritarianism seems uncontrolled, historical experience always confirms the potential and possible uprising of the people. Differences between people-oriented democracy and modern democracy is that the former emphasizes the emperor’s responsibility of governing the country and managing the people’s well-being rather than his own. This thinking was lately reinterpreted in the light of ‘meritocratic politics’ and ‘good governance’ in modern Chinese politics. Besides, this type of elitist democracy favors a way to make decision *for* the people, and the public participation and

⁶⁷From ‘Book of Rites (*lijii liyun*)’, a public goal is not only concerned with the political aspect, but a higher pursuit of universal moral value.

deliberation are only *acting* as a means in the decision-making process. In this sense, it differentiates itself from Western-style democracy.

3.2.2 Reconciling Confucian Deliberation into Democratic Narratives

The recent ideas of authoritarian consultation and authoritarian deliberation summarized in the second chapter further disentangled the relation between consultation/deliberation and democracy. As indicated, consultation and deliberation in authoritarianism cultivate the elites' authority and regime legitimacy. The latest studies also call for a rethinking of the discrepancies of deliberation under different cultural backgrounds. The deliberative system is more open and inclusive by engaging various practical contexts within. Albeit critics of Confucianism believe that some decadent Confucian doctrines are difficult to integrate and reconcile in the modern democratic narratives, sometimes they are self-contradictory. Faced with limited cultural sources, and highlighting the uniqueness of Chinese politics, it is therefore necessary to reinterpret these Confucian ideas and reconcile them with some democratic ingredients.

This is not a risk to loosely define or stretch the concept of deliberation, as the systemic turn in deliberative democracy handles the scope and boundary between deliberation and the others with a pluralist tradition. These clues are also traceable in the deliberation advocated by Confucianism that is based on meritocratic politics and morality. Albeit with very limited and superficial participation and deliberation under centralization, the ruling concept 'for the people (*weimin* 为民)' ultimately indicates the importance of dredging the top-down communication and interaction. The typical patriarchal governance claims that 'the emperor knows best for the people' rather than the alphabetic public. Nevertheless, public cooperation and deliberation are necessary to remedy officials' unwise decisions and misdeeds. Mencius thinks that public intelligence needs to be incorporated to offset the sage's imperfections; Xunzi also advocates a mindful obedience to autocracy with various top-down communication. These ideas provide potential elements for deliberation to take place within the dynastic centralization.

Unlike individualistic interest pursuit under Western liberal democracy, the existence of self-interests under collectivism is seemingly contradictory. Although Confucianism allows the expression of individual interests, the individual should however prioritize collective interests in case of conflict. Limited publicity in Confucian deliberation may contribute to

an uncritical sphere with top-down consultation/deliberation. Nevertheless, deliberative interactions are rare in the non-elite public. Tan (2014) enumerates several cases of open deliberation in the dynastic evolution, for example, regarding the capital relocating in *Shang* dynasty, but those cases are rare. Interestingly, changes of dynasties in Chinese history have never touched the fundamental question of autocracy. There is however a persistent hierarchical interaction in Confucianism, making equal deliberation difficult to achieve. Also, inequality amongst participants also leads to a lack of reciprocity expected in democratic deliberation. As Shi (2014) explains, “Confucianism approaches politics from the perspective of a comprehensive ethical doctrine but it is not a doctrine that demands conversion of all by any means possible”. In other words, *conversions* to its comprehensive doctrine cannot succeed by coercion. This consistent explanation provides evidence for the authoritarian deliberation proposed by He (2011), but it is far from democratic deliberation.

Also, Confucianism assumed a weak link between legitimized decision making with public deliberation. Later studies expand the relationship between deliberation and decision making with a reconsideration of the deliberative function on the clarification of public preferences in a procedural sense. Yet, deliberation contributes to and facilitates better decisions. This procedural setting has been inverted in traditional Chinese thinking of decision-making. For example, the appellation for officials as ‘parent-like cadres (*fumu guan* 父母官)’ in ancient China indicates that the cadres are overridden with the government’s political responsibility for decision-making. Nonetheless, proverbs like ‘water can carry a boat, it can also overturn it’ can always provide valuable lessons for alerting top leaders to focus on their accountabilities even in a top-down fashion. As Mencius insisted that, ‘the people are the most valuable, society comes second, and the emperor is the least’. These ideas reinterpret the governments’ willingness to further serve people’s well-being in a top-down fashion rather than a bottom-up empowerment.

A comparative analysis of some ideas between Confucian deliberation and democratic deliberation indicates both some divergences and overlaps (in terms of procedural settings or outcomes). For example, Confucianism emphasizes limited deliberative publicity; it favors more elitist deliberation with unequal and small-scope interaction. Conversely, democratic deliberation says more on a wide participation and against monopoly of elites. Both sides advocate deliberation between higher-ups and the public. Nevertheless, interactions between emperors and ministers (or the public) promoted by Confucianism

were merely top-down consultation, final decisions still depending on their adoption by the emperors. In short, China's consultation and deliberation in a modern sense are marked by Confucian thoughts which legitimize regime authority, but they tend to be more procedural and to emphasize substantive justice. For example, the system of contemporary political consultation is designed so that "the political consultation system should be conducted under the CCP's leadership" with public orderly participation⁶⁸. As a result, the modern discourse on Chinese deliberative democracy has sought many cultural inspirations and resources in its evolution. Simultaneously, it also reconciles some democratic narratives both in a procedural and consequential sense.

4 Official and Academic Discussions on *Xieshang Minzhu* 协商民主 (Consultative/Deliberative Democracy)

The predominance of Western theories in the past two centuries has always tended to marginalize these non-Western political changes. In the case of China, the reinterpretation of its own politics in the past three decades relied on some Western (mainly Anglo-Saxon) discourses. This dependence has later lead China's political reforms to lag far behind. The debates between the indigenization and westernization have always intertwined with a reflection on what are internal Chinese political studies in both the official discourse and academia. To follow this logic, a two-dimensional analysis on the official discourse and academic studies is conducted to disentangle domestic research on China's deliberative democracy. These two main discussions are analyzed for response to the growing voice of establishing a 'Chinese political discourse system'. I thus conducted a textual and semantic analysis on a large number of domestic references for further analyzing the focus of the latest studies on Chinese deliberative democracy. More likely, students in this realm eschew this very sensitive topic of democracy sometimes due to the free speech problems and benefit partially of the concept for defending their studies or case analysis. Rather than

⁶⁸Orderly political participation (*youyu zhengzhi canyu* 有序的政治参与) is most often mentioned in the official propaganda for establishing a harmonious society. As 'orderly' means, the CCP promoted mainly official-invited political spaces or sanctioned forms of political participation, this limited and controllable participation in politics should follow 'order', while the CCP has the final say on what constitutes order. This participatory design is in line with Huntington's (1968) discourse of 'participation in developing countries'. For example, the CCP's first goal is strengthening the party's authority, while citizens' empowerment is the second goal. Heberer (2009) also notes that such participation is activated by the party-state in a top-down process of authoritarian communitarianism.

connive with mainstream studies, my conclusions are made based on both quantitative and qualitative analysis.

4.1 Official Discourse on Consultative Democracy (*Xieshang Minzhu* 协商民主)

Official interpretations of ‘consultative democracy’ have gone through a fragmentation to systematization process. The watershed can be roughly drawn from the discussions of the two forms of democracy in China proposed by former president Jiang Zemin in 1991, namely, ‘people exercise their rights through elections and voting, and all parties conduct full deliberation before elections and voting to reach consensus on common issues as much as possible, are two important forms of socialist democracy’. Since then, successive leaders have continuously enriched this conception. After the 18th CPC National Congress, the socialist consultative democracy with Chinese characteristics (*zhongguo tese shehuizhuyi xieshang minzhu* 中国特色社会主义协商民主) gradually became an official configuration.

This discourse of consultative democracy is used to highlight the CCP’s superiority in channeling inputs and demands that are supposed to reflect people’s genuine needs without resorting to Western-like partisan politics (Wang and Groot, 2018). Some authors disdain the study of this official discourse and believe that those statements are more likely propaganda and pseudo-propositions with little practical significance, and thus bypass the textual analysis of the official literature. On the contrary, those official discourses, as well as their academic reinterpretations, all account for a rather straightforward and formal understanding of Chinese deliberative democracy.

4.1.1 Official Discourse of Consultative Democracy

At an early stage, in 1991, the CPPCC was identified by former President Jiang Zemin as the site of consultative democracy, while the NPC was supposed to embody a form of the electoral democracy (Zhou, 2007). In 2006, consultative democracy was more broadly endorsed as a way of reforming the political system in the official document of the CPC. In the official framing, the two main forms of socialist democracy in China were elections and voting on the one hand, and full consultation of the people before major decisions on

the other hand, are thus conducted with the objective of reaching consensus on public issues⁶⁹.

After 2007, the 17th Party Congress stated that all major national policies should be discussed by the CPPCC, a body which often engages in lengthy consultation, but lacks either the decision or veto power and is never a place of open dissent. The State Council information office thus explicitly stated that: “the combination of electoral democracy and consultative democracy is a major feature of the China’s socialist democracy”. This trend has been further confirmed by a recent and quite authoritative book which discusses the 协商民主 *xieshang minzhu* (officially translated in foreign languages as consultative democracy, see Zhou, Wang and Wang, eds, 2008) and concludes that it better suits China than a multi-party representative democracy (Lin, 2003; Zhou, Wang (eds), 2008; Wang, 2008; Yang, 2014). In 2013, the Third Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee further included “consultative democracy” in the plans for comprehensively deepening reform and Yu Zhengsheng, chairman of the CCP National Committee, said: “we must incorporate consultative democracy into the overall layout of the socialist democracy...we should also enhance the effectiveness of consultations...and further develop these forms of democracy”. In September 2014, Xi Jinping tackled the sensitive topic of democracy and stated that: “democracy is defined not only by people’s right to vote in an election but also the right to participate in political affairs on a daily basis”.

A summary for a more recent evolution of consultative democracy in China is conducive to the better understanding of the CCP’s framing of the political design and reforms. Socialist consultative democracy was written into the party’s documents for the first time after the 18th National Congress of the CCP in 2012 with the proposal that ‘consultative democracy is an important form of people’s democracy’. The Third Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee in 2013 further implemented its strategic deployment and explicitly indicated that consultative democracy is a unique form providing superior advantage to China’s socialist democracy. A consultative democratic system with reasonable procedures was thus highlighted in the Fourth Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee in 2014. The important speech delivered by president Xi Jinping at the 65th Anniversary of the CPPCC’s establishment (2014) was a programmatic document

⁶⁹ The Opinions of the CPC Central Committee on Strengthening the Work of the CPPCC. Available at: <http://cppcc.people.com.cn/GB/34961/60987/>. [Accessed 15 Jul. 2018].

giving a comprehensive and profound elaboration of the repositioning and characterization of consultative democracy.

In 2015, the CCP Central Committee issued the *Opinions on Strengthening Socialist Consultative Democracy Construction*. Later, the *Opinions on Strengthening the Consultation of Urban and Rural Communities (2015)* were issued by the CCP General Office of the Central Committee and General Office of State Council, and the *Implementation Opinions on Strengthening Political Party Consultation (2016)* enacted by the CCP General Office of the Central Committee, etc. With Xi's speeches on this special issue, they constitute rich official and authoritative first-hand sources for the later (re)interpretation by Chinese academia.

One has to stress that in the official framing, the consultative democracy has two basic dimensions: first of all, the political consultation and the multi-party cooperation and political consultation system under the CCP's leadership; the second refers to the social consultation and dialogue system. On the one hand, the CCP emphasizes the necessities for political consultation amongst the elites, especially but not exclusively with other officially recognized parties; on the other hand, it further expands the political and social consultation to the ordinary citizens. This idea of consultative democracy tends to replace (and is sometimes confused with) the Maoist idea of the mass-line: party and governments at national and local levels should have a close contact and develop a direct dialogue with the masses constantly⁷⁰.

For further restoring and analyzing these original intentions of the official discourse, a semantic analysis based on the comprehensive official literature is conducted. First of all, the use of technical means to intercept keywords and correlative words from a large number of texts can intuitively indicate the CCP's motivation and intention for further propelling of consultative democracy after the 18th NPC; then, fairer and broader conclusions can be made after placing these preliminary observations into wider Chinese politics. This two-stage analysis (quantitative and qualitative analysis) is theoretically helpful for an intuitive understanding of the official discourse on consultative democracy.

⁷⁰The 'mass line' is Mao's main theoretical contribution to the populist emphasis. Encouraging political mobilization, this discourse is conducted under the umbrella of the centralized party leadership. It was less institutionalized than the more recent discourse of 'consultative democracy'. Townsend (1977) stated that, "the mass campaign indicates Mao's rejection to the routine administration-with its implied mistrust of bureaucracy-and its arousal of popular emotions and interests." The more endorsed and equipped discourse of consultative democracy is designed in a more general sense as the main democratic form in contemporary China with various policy supports and empirical evidence.

4.1.2 Semantic Analysis: A Methodology

Despite a few ambiguities in the official definition of ‘consultative democracy’, an analysis of official discourse needs to exclude interference from personal preferences and more respect for the original texts (including the linguistic, semantic, rhetorical problem). In particular, the linguistic barrier is thought to pose obstacles to politics (Doerr Nicole, 2012) and can also cause problems in the democratic inclusion in linguistically pluralist polities. A political term first comes to the *semantic and linguistic* lens and then travels to its *conceptual* (Mulieri, 2016) meanings. Hence, the semantic analysis should function on speech-acts that belong to daily life as ways of “exercising in language philosophy” (Pitkin, 1967). That said, such a semantic analysis depends on the specific historical, social, and political context rooted in different linguistic experiences (Koselleck, 1979), which is simultaneously subject to continuous changes. This means that the first step to analyze the official concept of ‘consultative democracy’ is to look into how the given notion has been associated with different meanings in Chinese language.

Such linguistic diversity facilitates dealing with the emerging transnational and polysemic politics, and provides an opportunity to look into the Chinese discourses. The semantic differences between consultation or consultative democracy in official discourse are perhaps easier to articulate since their different meanings correspond to different words. But my focus is not how a concept is fixed by its identical object nor if it is the name of a thing, but to concentrate on the semantic and collocative expressions that can handle the different ways according to the senses that they can take within a determined context. Following this logic, this semantic analysis of Chinese official discourse is conducted based on a large textual and linguistic corpus precluding academic interferences.

The textual analysis is based on the corpus established on the official propaganda after the 18th NPC in 2013, when *consultative democracy* was officially adopted in ‘Chinese democratic discourse’. Data sources come from the official database with the title=“*xieshang minzhu* (协商民主)” or keywords=“*xieshang minzhu*” with a total of 2,018 items⁷¹ through advanced search⁷². Albeit data before 2013 is not included, official interpretations were not

⁷¹The data includes the articles, (analytical) reports, interviews, meeting minutes, speeches, official documents, notes and related documents.

⁷²Given that not all the results are positively correlated, I thus manually select the outcomes outside of the overlap (advanced and fuzzy searching) and further integrate the two parts.

systematically engaged until the 18th NPC, such discussions were more likely conducted by academia. Three main axes are therefore included in this official perspective, I. the official propaganda (newspapers); II. leaders' speeches, especially Xi Jinping's discourses on *xieshang minzhu*; and III. official related documents.

- I. The five most authoritative official media (newspapers) in China⁷³, People's Daily (*Renmin ribao* 人民日报) with 458 reports, Guangming Daily (*Guangming ribao* 光明日报) with 560 reports, Xinhua Daily (*Xinhua ribao* 新华日报) with 447 reports, China Comment (*Banyuetan* 半月谈) with 320 reports, Qiushi (*Qiusbi* 求是) with 37 reports, formerly known as Red Flag (*Hongqi* 红旗) with 86 reports).
- II. The top leaders' series of important speech databases comprising 95 items⁷⁴.
- III. Official documents whose title or subject is consultation or consultative democracy (*xieshang minzhu* 协商民主) in the Party-Building Database with 15 items⁷⁵.

This plain textual analysis is helpful to understand the superficial implication of the official propaganda but above all its underlying metaphors. Furthermore, a keyword-correlation-analysis (appendix I) is adopted to avoid the ambiguities by focusing on out-of-sample predictions and selecting the best model for the underlying data from a set of candidate models. Correlation analysis is based on the characteristics of the Chinese language, in

⁷³The authoritative and official media chosen are mainly focused on the political-related newspapers given to the political attribute of consultative democracy. China's largest-circulated newspapers also known as the CCP propaganda media (*dangmei* 党媒), they publish articles and reports expressing the CCP's official views. Technically, overlapping parts amongst the various newspapers and social media, for example, the *People's Daily* and *Guangming Daily* may jointly report the same content simultaneously, and are removed manually; Also, albeit the newspaper selections all belong to the state media, those reports may be reprinted in the local media, for instance, *People's Daily*, *Guangxi Daily* (*Guangxi ribao* 广西日报) and *Tibet Daily* (*Xizang ribao* 西藏日报) may quote the same report simultaneously multiple times. Therefore, this database in this sense covers all the reports and analyses of *consultative democracy* by both state and local media from 2013 to 2019.

⁷⁴They are mainly Xi Jinping's important discourses on consultative democracy since the 18th NPC. They also include some official reports by Zhao Leji, the member of Standing Committee of Political Bureau of CCP Central Committee in Shanghai: Vigorously Promoting the Construction of Grassroots Service-Oriented Party Organizations and Strengthen the Communication and Consultation between Grassroots Party Members and the Public (2013), the emphasis in 2013 by Liu Yunshan, member of Standing Committee of Political Bureau of CCP Central Committee that Strengthen and Improve the Party's Leadership over Comprehensive and Deepening Reforms and Inter-Party Consultations. They are available at: <http://djsjk.people.cn/search/index/338979> and <http://jhsjk.people.cn>. [Accessed 03 Aug. 2019].

⁷⁵Official documents include related documents released by the CCP central committee, as well as relevant meeting notes, theoretical explanations, case analysis and interpretation files in the Party-building database. Available at: <http://djsjk.people.cn/cover>. [Accessed 03 Aug. 2019].

which synonyms can be classified into the same catalogue, such as high-frequency words like the “Chinese characteristics (*zhongguo te'se* 中国特色 6537),” “characteristics (*te'se* 特色 5444),” “socialism (*shehui zhuyi* 社会主义 11608),” “socialism with Chinese characteristics (*zhongguo te'se shehui zhuyi* 中国特色社会主义 12380)”. These similar expressions can be further classified as ‘Chinese characteristics’ with correlated sub-keywords of “CCP (*gongchandang* 共产党 2503),” “party leadership (*dang de lingdao* 4255),” “political reforms (*zhengzhi gaige* 政治改革 5632)” and “problem-oriented (*wenti/Wenti daoxiang* 问题/问题导向 5741)” (appendix I); keywords like “system/mechanism (*tizhi/jizhi* 制度/机制, total with 15793),” “institution (*zhidu* 制度 10224)” and related adjectives can be further classified as the institutionalization of consultative democracy; The third category is “democracy (*minzhu* 民主 21262),” “forms of democracy (*minzhu xingshi* 民主形式 20932),” and “socialist democracy with Chinese characteristics (*Shehui zhuyi te'se minzhu* 中国特色社会主义 8551).”

Facing simply too many texts, technical means are adopted to carry out the large-scale semantic analysis, in which some miscellaneous words (unimportant modifiers, auxiliary words, conjunctions, etc.) are removed. Simultaneously, a rough outline is depicted of the keywords and their correlative sub-keywords. This two-dimensional analysis is conducted with three stages:

- I. Building of the corpus (based on the aforementioned Chinese and English literature).
- II. Conducting statistical analysis 1): Wordcloud-pre-treatment of the Chinese data: decoding, tokenizing, cleaning those functional words and thus visualizing the keywords according to the frequency by Logiciel R and Python. The wordcloud in different sizes represents the frequency or the importance of the keywords⁷⁶; 2). Filtering the 20 most used words and their frequency with third-party support of Python-Matplotlib in the histogram, also sort out those words with occurrence frequency above 3,000; and 3). Outlining the word embeddings in the correlation network with Word2vec and then quantifying and characterizing semantic similarities between the linguistic items based on their distributional

⁷⁶The word frequency can identify keywords within different categories and further measure how often those words occur in texts rather than dichotomously classify the official tone into positive or negative. Those results are validated within the standard evaluations in Chinese language, and possibly providing an overall comprehension of Chinese consultative democracy in terms of distributing complex attributive concepts and rhetoric issues.

properties in large samples of language data within continuous skip-gram architecture. Finally, adopting the t-SNE to further visualize groups of the most similar words in high-dimensional Word2Vec Word embeddings, which are located in multidimensional space⁷⁷.

III. Semantic results (drawing conclusions based on the semantic analysis of the keywords and sub-keywords correlation).

4.2 Official Interpretations with the Semantic Analysis

To begin with, a semantic comparison between Anglo-Saxon and Chinese literature is conducted to capture the latest foci in both sides. This comparison may be asymmetric given that such analysis is rarely available in the Western official studies as research is mostly conducted by academia. Still, this comparative perspective can highlight some differences between the two camps, meanwhile, shed light on some key characteristics of the Chinese official discourse with three main extended conclusions of: I. the consultative democracy with Chinese Characteristics (general description; debate with electoral democracy); II. institutionalization of consultative democracy; and III. embeddedness of the consultation or consultative democracy in Chinese democratic discourses.

4.2.1 Semantic Comparison between Anglo-Saxon⁷⁸ and Chinese Literature

Unlike the rather firm link between deliberation and democracy in democracies, there is a paradoxical coexistence of authoritarianism and deliberation in nondemocratic context with 3345 of “deliberation” and 3748 of “authoritarianism” in English, it is 0.69% as the high-frequency words. Nevertheless, the criticisms were also crucial, as Leib (2005) stated “assuming almost any participatory institution with deliberative nature seems too generous,

⁷⁷The scatter diagrams of tables 1 and 2 show the correlative words of the keywords and also give a clearer visual effect on how the sub-keywords are distributed in the constant X and Y coordinates.

⁷⁸Given to the linguistic ambiguities in translation and word-correspondence in English literatures, resources in this part are collecting through the rather fuzzy search with the keywords or topics of ‘Chinese/China deliberative/consultative democracy’ from the Bibcnrs and Google Scholar with 124 articles. The BibCnrs is the portal that provides access to the CNRS’ (Le Centre national de la recherche scientifique Francaise) digital document resources. It was developed in 2016 and replaced the previous scientific information portals of BiblioPlanets, BiblioSciences, BiblioSHS, BiblioST2I, BiblioVie and TitaneSciences, that becoming one of the biggest digital libraries in Europe.

given that this participation was occurring in a state without the most basic of democratic indicia: competitive elections on the national level and basic liberal rights”. Table 2 indicates a strong tendency of the party’s monopoly (with the correlated words like ‘monopoly’ (0.79), ‘dominate’ (0.76), ‘control’ (0.74), ‘leadership’ (0.71)” and ‘state’ (0.92), ‘regime’ (0.98) shares 24.2% totally). The lack of competitive elections (election as a keyword did not appear in the top 20 high-frequency keywords) thus leads to the more fragile deliberation in China.

Table 2 WordCloud in Chinese and English

WordCloud in Chinese (top 20 keywords) (Chinese Words-Pinyin-Translation-Frequency-Distribution)				
民主 (<i>minzhu</i> democracy 21262 17.26%)	人民(<i>renmin</i> people 9595 11.63%)	问题 (<i>wenti</i> problem 5741)	机制 (<i>jizhi</i> mechanism 4718)	体系 (<i>tixi</i> system 3717)
协商 (<i>xieshang</i> deliberation 20932 17.99%)	国家 (<i>guojia</i> state 8932 7.25%)	改革 (<i>gaige</i> reform 5632 4.57%)	领导 (<i>lingdao</i> leadership 4255 3.45%)	治理 (<i>zhili</i> governance 3647 2.96%)
社会主义 (<i>shehui zhuyi</i> socialism 11608 13.84%)	社会 (<i>shehui</i> society 8754)	特色 (<i>te'se</i> characteristic 5444)	群众 (<i>qunzhong</i> mass 4135)	中国共产党 (<i>zhongguo gongchandang</i> CCP 3461)
制度 (<i>zhidu</i> institutionalization 11075 12.01%)	政治 (<i>zhengzhi</i> politics 8551 6.94%)	习近平 (<i>Xi Jinping</i> 5082)	基层 (<i>jieng</i> local 3795 3.08%)	政协 (<i>zhengxie</i> CPPCC 3077)
WordCloud in English (top 20 keywords)				
Politics (4526)	Government (2939)	State (1918)	Regime (1210)	Economic (867)
Public (4344)	Party (2916)	Local (1905)	Power (1114)	Consultation (837)
Authoritarian (3748)	Society (2316)	Governance (1452)	Law (1071)	Reform (779)
Deliberation (3345)	Policy (2162)	Participation (1242)	Citizen (948)	Institution (778)

Note: This table shows the top 20 keywords and their frequencies in both Chinese and English literature. In the Chinese WordCloud, distribution of some keywords is not marked given to the classification of some aforementioned synonyms, such as ‘people’ and ‘mass’, ‘institutionalization’ and ‘system’, ‘socialism’ and ‘characteristics’. The distribution rate in Chinese keywords is based on the proportion of selected keywords in the corpus.

The objective *raison d'être* of consultative democracy in China is that its distinction from the very Western discourse is largely due to its instrumentally-driven and problem-oriented functions (see table 1 and 2 with the high-frequency keywords like the noun “problem *wenti* 问题”>5,000, verb like “governance *zhili* 治理”, “solve *jiejue* 解决”, “deal with *chuli* 处理”>4,000) which is in line with the typical pragmatism in Chinese politics for reducing the social conflicts and level of opposition, facilitating compliance with and implementation of state policy. Consultation and deliberation can be effective conflict-resolution devices, and a means to overcome polarization (He, 2016). Even adopted with high-technique methods in some modern (grassroots) deliberative experimentations, this deliberative form sometimes fails to be sufficiently deliberative and representative.

Against this background, Western theorists respectively stress the important role of the public sphere and civil society in developing deliberative democracy. Habermas (1994) and Dryzek (1990) stated that democracy, “can flourish only by creating, operating within, and confronting the state from a rather autonomous public sphere”, but these traceable clues may be very problematic in Chinese political context under a powerful state monopoly. Keywords like public, citizen, mass (*qunzhong* 群众), are usually accompanied with the high-frequency words like (party)-leadership (*dang de lingdao* 党的领导), power (*lilang* 力量), etc. Those party state-sponsored/official-background deliberative activities indicate another form of social-stability-maintenance type, within which with inactive public involvement rather than a cultivation of the civil society or public empowerment. In a nutshell, the comparative semantic analysis on both the Chinese and English literature depicts two different types of deliberation, sometimes with their theoretical and empirical clash, namely, pragmatism-based and controllable deliberation in authoritarianism and individualistic deliberation in civil society in democracies.

Table 3 Sub-Keywords Correlation in Chinese and English

Chinese Keywords	Correlation	English Keywords	Correlation	Chinese Keywords	Correlation	English Keywords	Correlation	Chinese Keywords	Correlation
民主 (<i>minzhu</i> Democracy)		Politics		协商(<i>xieshang</i> Consultation/Deliberation)		Democracy		中国共产党 (<i>zhongguo gongchandang</i> CCP)	
自由民主 (<i>zìyóu mínzhǔ</i> Liberal Democracy)	0.72390	Theory	0.91805	民主协商(<i>mínzhǔ xiéshāng</i> Democratic Deliberation)	0.80891	Authoritarianism	0.89766	核心作用 (<i>hèxīn zuòyòng</i> Key Role)	0.82400
民主协商 (<i>mínzhǔ xiéshāng</i> Democratic Deliberation)	0.69931	Democratization	0.89796	含义 (<i>hànyì</i> Meaning)	0.70680	Democratic	0.88587	统一战线(<i>tóngyī zhànxiàn</i> United Front Work)	0.70778
代替 (<i>dàitì</i> Replace)	0.66430	Modern	0.89774	参与 (<i>cānyù</i> Participation)	0.70206	Governance	0.87651	绝对 (<i>juéduì</i> Absolute)	0.69769
政党政治 (<i>zhèngdǎng zhèngzhì</i> Party Politics)	0.66317	Authoritarianism	0.89728	问题 (<i>wèntí</i> Problem)	0.69851	Representativeness	0.87146	集中统一 (<i>jìzhōng tóngyī</i> Centralization and Unification)	0.69347
论争 (<i>lùnzhēng</i> Agure)	0.65949	Resilience	0.89438	恳谈 (<i>kěntán</i> Honest talk)	0.69759	Party		干部 (<i>gānbù</i> Cadre)	0.68795
民主选举 (<i>mínzhǔ xuǎnjǔ</i> Democratic Election)	0.65667	Culture	0.89249	政治协商 (<i>zhèngzhì xiéshāng</i> Political Consultation)	0.67288	Leadership	0.91660	人民政协 (<i>renmin zhèngxié</i> C/LPPCC)	

社会主义 (shehui zhuyi Socialism)		Governance		制度 (zhidu Institutionalization)		Consultation	0.88727	统一战线(tongyi zhanxian United Front Work)	0.78594
特色 (te'se Characteristic)	0.71469	Administration	0.91510	顶层 (dingceng Top-Level)	0.65866	Decaying	0.85567	多党合作 (duodang hezuo Multi-Party Cooperation)	0.71284
理论体系 (lilun tixi System Info)	0.70316	Cadre	0.90811	制度化 (zhidu hua Institutionalization)	0.59319	State		政治协商 (zhengzhi xieshang Political Consultation)	0.69723
群众性 (qunzhong xing Mass)	0.69302	Hierarchy	0.89906	全过程 (quanguocheng Overall Process)	0.59146	Legitimacy	0.97237	参政党 (canzheng dang Participatory Party)	0.69080
共同理想 (gongtong lixiang Common Ideal)	0.69252	Policies	0.89785	政府管理 (zhengfu guanli Governance)	0.56849	Domination	0.86961	专门机构 (zhuanmen jigou Specialized Body)	0.68810
人民 (renmin People)		Participation		领导 (lidang Leadership)		Reshape	0.84811	基层 (jiceng Local)	
群众路线 (qunzhong luxian Mass Line)	0.74237	Decision-making	0.98872	党的领导 (dangde lingdao CCP Leadership)	0.79452	Exert	0.83883	直接参与 (zhijie canyu direct Participation)	0.87353
密切联系 (miqie lianxi Tie up)	0.68455	Directedly	0.98653	全局性 (quanju xing Overall Importance)	0.76639			有序 (youxu Order)	0.85341
党和人民 (dang he renmin CCP and People)	0.67146	Facilitation	0.98650	政治改革 (zhengzhi gaige Political Reform)	0.74787			决策 (juece Decision-Making)	0.82351

Note: Due to the semantic repetition of some synonyms (high-frequency keywords), table 2 only lists several key Chinese and English keywords as examples; meanwhile, the ratio equals to the most sub-correlation words to the total selected sub-correlation words (50 samples), as shown in the table, all sub-correlation words with a relevance of more than 50%.

4.2.2 Semantic Outcomes of the Chinese Official Discourse

These quantitative analyses are theoretically helpful for a more intuitive observation of the textual mapping, even with very few available intra-party discussions. These analyses based on authoritative official texts is still persuasive in revealing the CCP's attempts to facilitate consultative democracy in the political settings. As such, conclusions are made based on the aforementioned two-stage semantic analysis with the (sub-correlation) keywords. These rather straightforward interpretations are different from academic discussions and reinterpretations, while the latter is usually mixed with the authors' personal preferences. Three key dimensions are summarized in the conclusion, *consultative democracy with Chinese characteristics*, *the institutionalization of consultative democracy* and *consultation and deliberation embedded in Chinese-style democracy*.

4.2.2.1 Consultative Democracy with Chinese Characteristics

In China, the label with 'Chinese characteristics' used to highlight China's unique politics, economy and culture seems to be a very fashion in political studies in last decades. The indigenization of Chinese political science has led to abandon rhetoric and linguistic ambiguities and turn to the pragmatic and practical analysis of consultative democracy with *Chinese characteristics*. It can be clearly seen from the high-frequency and sub-correlation keywords with "characteristic (*Te'se* 特色)" and "socialism (*Shehui zhuyi* 社会主义)", which account for the largest proportion with the frequency up to 17,500. In the textual interpretations, this discourse is featured with the 'people's democracy (the people and democracy are high-frequency words)', this consultative democracy guarantees that the 'people rule' (consultation is instrumental in this sense). Also, consultation is monopolized by the CCP ('leadership', synonyms like 'dominant', 'monopoly', and keywords like 'state',

‘regime’ are all high-frequency words⁷⁹). Also, this type of consultation is practiced in the indigenized bodies and institutions, like the C/LPPCC and United Front.

It must be added that, albeit ‘election’, being a low-frequency keyword, has been downplayed or purposely avoided in the official frame, it should be highlighted in the official efforts to reconcile the two democratic forms of ‘electoral and consultative democracy’. In his speeches, Xi reemphasized that, ‘democracy is not an ornament⁸⁰’, ‘democracy is not electoral...and it needs to be combined with some other democratic forms⁸¹’. He strives to place consultative democracy with *Chinese characteristics* within an indigenized discourse without prioritizing ‘election’. Empirically, the Chinese local election came to a halt and tobogganed in a seemingly nonreciprocal manner in the 1990s, as governments at all levels showed a clear refusal to the electoral democracy. Direct election of cadres at the very local level in Chengdu, which was regarded as a prototype, was also eliminated in the last decade. Therefore, in the official framing, democracy based on consultation or a combination of consultative and electoral democracy overshadows and eases the electoral pressure.

This conclusion is absolutely not without leeway. Official documents on the local level (sometimes grassroots, local is a high-frequency keywords with the correlation sub-keywords like direct participation, decision-making and expressions of interests) also emphasize the importance of ‘election’ under the premise of local autonomy. For instance, procedural consultation and deliberation are also necessary in the village elections. Interestingly, in some local practices, participatory budgeting, for example, consultation is prescribed while voting is adopted in the final decision making. Local consultation, sometimes deliberation, facilitates a discussion on ‘local democracy’, in a very fragmented manner due to the limited empowerments and official control.

⁷⁹The Speech at the 65th Anniversary of the Founding of the CPPCC National Committee (2014), Xi Jinping stressed that: “to develop socialist consultative democracy, we must uphold the party’s leadership”. The report of the 19th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party (2017) also stated that consultative democracy is the realizing form of the party leadership, etc.

⁸⁰Speeches of Xi Jinping at the meeting commemorating the 65th anniversary of the founding of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (2014).

⁸¹Speeches of Xi Jinping at the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference Working Conference and the celebration of the 70th anniversary of the founding of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (2019).

4.2.2.2 The Institutionalization of Consultative Democracy

Official discourses on consultative democracy before 18th NPC were usually accompanied with the misinterpretation (even in some official documents) of “*consultative democracy with Chinese characteristics*,” “*socialism of consultative democracy*,” and “*Chinese-style consultative democracy*,” etc. Another focus of institutionalization of consultative democracy followed with a conceptual rectification (the institutionalization is a high-frequency keyword with a total of 2,601). As a matter of fact, Chinese political culture usually pays little attention to the procedure and institutionalization, and decisions are made by leaders with convictions that procedures are usually inferior to efficiency. This tradition is firmly connected with the leaders’ willingness to resort to procedural consultation, rather than the rule of law and institutionalization. Nevertheless, modern governance requires institutionalizing consultation and deliberation in institutions. Such thoughts are traceable to Mao’s mass line, which emphasized, “consulting, listening to, and valuing the masses’ political voice and living with the masses and sharing their lives”. This institutional shift was more likely adopted to face the rapid economic and civil society changes, in which government and public jointly solve practical problems, which can also be found in table 1 with the high-frequency word “problem-(oriented)”. For the more recent official formulations, it is regarded as a new form of ‘consultative governance’ that combines executive orders with democratic consultative mechanism.

The CCP’s ambition to further facilitate consultative and sometimes deliberative institutional designs seems more open than many democracies in terms of institutional innovation. Typically, it claims that the political consultation in the CPPCC is better than the tedious bargaining in Western parliaments. Nevertheless, the fact is that deliberative experiments largely practiced in the local with the large-scale and regime-level institutional design are absent on the agenda. Correlation sub-keywords to institutionalization are mostly present with ‘top (party leadership)’ and ‘governance’, that indicate the relationship amongst the party control, public participation and consultation and governance. The (un)willingness for institutionalization and the party’s (in)direct monopoly are hierarchically connected. On the one hand, for the more professional and higher-hierarchy consultative institutions like the C/LPPCC, keywords like ‘control’, ‘monopoly’ appear more frequently, and *vice versa*. On the other hand, when such consultation and deliberation

link with governance, it shows the features of modernized and standardized governance in a way.

In short, institutionalization can reduce the interference of personal preferences and be more in line with the modern political settings. Nevertheless, when this institutional consultation straightforwardly links with the party's leadership in official propaganda, this institutionalization can be regarded as consolidating authoritarianism rather than as a real public empowerment. For example, all the party documents in the corpus bluntly state that the CCP's leadership is the basic guarantee of socialist consultative democracy, and that leadership can be direct or indirect, procedural or result-oriented⁸². The more recent emphasis on 'orderly political participation (*youxu zhengzhi canyu* 有序政治参与)' in the public sphere can be an example to tell how this type of institutionalization serves to limit public rights rather than emancipates.

4.2.2.3 Consultation and Deliberation Embedded in Chinese-Style Democracy

The formulation of *Chinese-style democracy* highlights the function and role played by the consultative and deliberative approach that is adopted to facilitate Chinese authoritarianism. A more practical examination indicates that the CCP's capabilities of national mobilization, as well as the local participation and deliberation in turn also facilitate the implementation of consultative/deliberative governance. According to Tong's (2019) semantic analysis of the 19th Report of NPC, consultative democracy appeared with a total of 12 times and accounted for 9.01% of the report, "the essence of the China's democracy is public affairs can be deliberated by themselves". These important discourses promote consultative democracy to the fifth major democratic form of the

⁸²Many studies have explored the relationship between deliberation and power (synonyms like coercion, leadership, pressure, tyranny of the majority, etc.). Since normative deliberation cannot be fully achieved in real practice, deliberative democracy is inextricably connected with structures of domination. This domination not only comes from the unequal power of money, resource, status, etc. of the participants, it is also produced in the deliberative process. In an ideal scenario, coercion is rendered irrelevant by deliberation even though it is not eliminated. In the context of the authoritarianism, especially in the Chinese official discourse, the leadership has absolutely overridden deliberation (except very local practices). Institutionalization is serving authoritarian rule with institutionalized, legitimized and controllable deliberation rather than the real facilitation of the public participation and deliberation.

socialist democracy for further ‘realizing the party’s leadership’ along with democratic election, governance, decision-making and supervision.

Albeit democracy has always been a sensitive topic in China, it is still the most frequent keyword in table 1 (21262), followed by deliberation with 20,932 frequencies. Democracy-related correlation words in table 2 are “liberal democracy (0.72),” “replacement (0.66),” “argument (0.65)” and “democratic election (0.65)”. It indicates that Chinese-style democracy ultimately serves as the indigenized backdrop of consultative democracy rather than Western discourses. Also, the CCP reinforces the path of Chinese democracy by reaffirming the consultative/deliberative approach in Chinese politics⁸³ and preaching the people-centered doctrine (people ‘*renmin* 人民’ 9595) to enhance its participation and deliberation. Interpretations like the “China model (*zhongguo moshi* 中国模式),” “China Road (*zhongguo daolu* 中国道路)” that are presented in a seemingly permeable manner in official political discourse simultaneously engage consultation/deliberation as an indispensable part with some high-frequency sub-correlation keywords like “political consultation (*zhengzhi xieshang* 政治协商),” “intra/inter-party consultation (*dangnei/dangji xieshang* 党内/党际协商),” “political consultative conference (*zhengxie* 政协)”. As Yan (2017) underlined it, “China’s political consultation system will not regard free election, military nationalization and separation of power as its prerequisite and as the sole approach to advance China’s democratization. Democracy is a thing that should be able to quickly reflect the people’s will. In this sense, governmental performance is superior to democratic elections”.

Chinese-style democracy and some other synonyms may be quite provoking, and political and economic reforms are always carried out within the CCP authoritarian monopoly. In the short term, the CCP successfully indoctrinates its people with such presetting democratic model by highlighting its priorities in a nonelectoral and less noxious way. In turn, these democratic conceptions among the Chinese people buy the regime legitimacy and support. In short, official interpretations of consultative democracy are embedded in the Chinese democratic discourse, and these multi-complementary promotions indicate the connections between consultation, deliberation and democracy in China.

⁸³In addition to the two-track democratic discourses of ‘election’ and ‘consultation’, Yan Jirong, professor at Beijing University, also stated that, the CCP is transiting its focuses on the democratization from “referendum” and ‘election’ to the free and equal debate and consultation and deliberation in contemporary China. See Jirong, Y. (2011). From ‘the Executive-led’ to ‘Limited Government’. *Academia Bimestrie*, 3.

4.3 Academic Reinterpretations and Dissents

Another important lens of academic discussion contributes to a better understanding of Chinese ‘deliberative democracy’, especially with unofficial and apolitical discourses. These academic advances involve studies of almost every aspect and undoubtedly facilitate the implementation of this indigenized discourse. Nevertheless, most of this scholarship is cheer-leading and reinterpreting the official discourse and propaganda. Dissenting and critical voices are rare. This suppression is not surprising in authoritarian context, especially as the situation in terms of administration of academic research, formalization and superficiality of social science studies in the universities and research centers is deteriorating. Nonetheless, criticisms still exist despite their weakness. Bearing this in mind, academic discussions are further presented in a two-dimensional analysis with mainstream academic reinterpretations of official discourse, as well as some dissenting views.

4.3.1 Literature Review, Academic Focus on Chinese Deliberative Democracy

Domestic academic reviews on deliberative democracy achieved fruitful outcomes in the last two decades. Nevertheless, this scholarship was not mature before the 18th CCP’s National Congress. The literature review begins with fragmented discussions in the early 2000, to a more flourishing mapping after the 18th National Congress in 2013. In 2002, German philosopher Jürgen Habermas proposed the idea of ‘Three Norms of Democracy’ in a lecture in China, which motivated many Chinese theorists and practitioners working on this special issue as well as its practices. Professor Yu Keping, commonly recognized as a most prestigious party adviser, thus introduced deliberative democracy theory in the article of *‘Hot Issues in Contemporary Western Political Theory’* published in 2003, which underlined that “direct face-to-face dialogue between and among political actors on policy-making process is the discursive dimension for Chinese democracy. Deliberation between government and public is a necessary link for democratic decision-making in China”.

The same year, Lin (2003) proposed the very concept of *deliberative politics* after profound studies on Habermas’ deliberative ideas. According to Lin, “deliberative preferences are determined roughly by practical conditions, historical responsibilities and China’s political concepts”. Later, Lin handled the question of the relation between the United Front Work and deliberative politics in China. Official agencies like the *Central Compilation and*

Translation Bureau's China Center for Comparative Politics systematically introduced deliberative democracy theory around 2006. Journals and magazines, such as *Marxism and Reality* also published several analytical papers on this very special issue. More recently, '*Deliberative Democracy Translation Series*' edited by Yu Keping was published by the Central Compilation Press. It comprehensively introduced the normative paradigms, practical forms and some other key dimensions of deliberative democracy. Simultaneously, academia also made efforts to search for some relatively narrow and concrete topics.

After the 18th National Congress in 2012, academic study has gradually been standardized in line with the rather *solid* official formulation of consultative democracy (*xieshang minzhu* in Chinese). Nevertheless, most academic outcomes at this stage were following firmly the regime tempo to rephrase, reinterpret and reconsolidate such official discourse, policies and political reforms, etc. This evolutionary timeline clearly interprets the seemingly deepening understanding of Chinese deliberative democracy. Research topics are distributed to several mainstream studies, for instance, the socialist deliberative democracy (synonyms or polysemes, with Chinese characteristic, Chinese-style) (Li, 2014; Song, 2017; Zhang, 2017; Ren, 2019); the special consultative body of CPPCC⁸⁴ or beyond (Tan, 2017; Li, 2017; Zhang, 2019); deliberative governance (Zhang, 2019; Tang, 2020)⁸⁵; comparative political studies (Liu, 2012, 2018; Guo, 2018); Chinese political reform (Bao, 2008; Wu, 2014; Yu, 2018); local/grassroots deliberations (Chen, 2014; Zhang *et al.*, 2015; Li, 2015). These studies cover almost all domains and focus of deliberative democracy in contemporary China.

Nonetheless, a considerable part of these studies proved to be quite superficial with constant reinterpretation of the official propaganda in a relatively restricted academia. It is rather common for a batch of older scholars that tend to overemphasize China's uniqueness while overlooking the comparative study. Even if there are comparisons, they tend to strictly criticize Western liberalism-based deliberation or deliberative democracy with the pufferies of China's indigenized discourse, which is even the case of some new

⁸⁴At present, C/LPPCC are commonly recognized as the specialized (*zhuanyemen* 专门) consultative body (not limited) in Chinese political settings. Nevertheless, those emerging informal or quasi-consultative/deliberative designs and settings have flourished in the last two decades, especially in the grassroots. These innovations enriched the institutionalization of consultation/deliberation in China.

⁸⁵Deliberative governance is increasingly mentioned as part of democratization of Chinese politics (e.g. Li, 2017; Zhang, 2019; Tang, 2020). This practical lens is interpreted with other governance types in authoritarianism, namely, pragmatism, instrumentalism and supplementary to the elections. Further empirical evidence is given in the fifth chapter with case studies.

leftists. This confidence comes from China's fast-growing economy and remarkable governance performance - especially in 2020, an impressive year that witnessed how China and the West reacted to the big pandemic. This encouragement has further contributed to the confidence of the public in China's governance. Nevertheless, these complacencies are leading to academic isolation, not only in the unfair appraisal of Western studies, but also in the superficial reflection on indigenized theories.

Besides, political science in China is deeply indoctrinated and saturated with the CCP's ideologies and the strict surveillance of authorities. For instance, publications in political domain as well as project applications should be subjected to *political review* in most universities and research institutions. Such monopoly makes deliberative democracy studies either touting official discourse or focusing on those minutiae to avoid approaching with sensitive topics. Academics under authoritarianism are being tamed to cater to official preferences. Besides these mainstream studies, there are also some dissents (those may involve a critic of Chinese authoritarianism and policy, e.g. Wang, 2011.2016; Deng, 2018). The textual analysis and interpretation in the following part intend to engage all these studies, (non)mainstream, pro-official or relatively independent studies, to revealing the whole picture of Chinese deliberative democracy in academic discussions.

4.3.2 Academic Reinterpretations: Obedience or Critique

The academic literatures are easier to reach than those official documents. The analysis in this part adopts a similar methodology to that in the previous session with Chinese largest database-CNKI⁸⁶. Nie and Wang (2019) have conducted a quantitative analysis of Chinese 'deliberative democracy' with a total of 24,858 articles (articles after the 18th National Congress account for 19,797, and make up more than 80% of the whole data). This study highlights two dimensions: first of all, the mapping of the Chinese deliberative democracy from 2000 to present with its latest foci; secondly, the methodological transition from the *grandiose narrative* in political science to rather scientific methods (a more Western way) like quantitative studies. Adopting such methodologies in textual analysis can help avoid the ambiguities of macroscopic narrations.

⁸⁶Far from a mere literature combing, this discourse analysis of deliberative democracy in academia is carried out with the toolkit of CiteSpace to analyze the corpus established with the collections (papers, comments, books, etc.) from CNKI and focusing on cutting-edge development on this special issue.

A considerable number of publications largely overlap with and adhere to the very official discourse. They are further categorized into several core dimensions. Firstly, theoretical reconstruction. In 2007, the white paper on ‘*China’s Party System*’ issued by the *Information Office of the State Council* advanced that ‘electoral and consultative democracy are two types of socialist democratic forms’ for the first time. This was a watershed and thereafter, domestic academic focus has shifted from the study of Western theory to the concerns of the indigenized Chinese deliberative democracy in a broader sense. The 18th CPC National Congress formally confirmed the conception of ‘socialist consultative democracy’ in the party and at regime level, and authors like Yu Keping, Lin Shangli, Chen Jiagang, Li Junru, etc. began to rethink conceptual or theoretical problems, among which some valuable ideas emerged. For example, Yu (2014) put forward that, with the CCP’s leadership, Chinese authoritarian politics facilitates the implementation of deliberative governance in China, which is a superior option to electoral democracy. Li (2014) also proposed the three basic features of the deliberative democracy with *Chinese characteristics*: namely, democracy can be achieved with deliberation as a main method, as well as democratic participation (*minzhu canyu* 民主参与), and good governance.

A second focus is on deliberative agencies and channels in hierarchies. In 2015, *Opinions on Strengthening the Construction of Socialist Consultative Democracy* issued by the CCP Central Committee systematically categorized consultation and deliberation between and among the C/LPPCC, mass/societal organizations, local/grassroots. Since then, Chen (2016) has asserted that intra/inter-party consultation plays an important role in multi-party cooperation and the political consultative system, and constitutes a solid part in the socialist consultative democratic system. In an in-depth analysis of the relation between the NPC and the CPPCC, Bai and Tan (2018) proposed five principles in advancing the CPPCC’s participation in legislative consultation: namely, the party leadership, accurate standing, orderly regulation, superiority, and positiveness. Participation and consultation should also permeate the whole legislative process. Qi (2017) also indicated that the partisan consultation, as a historical legacy should be highlighted and embedded in modern governance. In a nutshell, these channels facilitate the interactions between and among superiors and subordinates, it does not have to be authentic or genuine. More importantly, they ensure the smooth and dynamic flow in channels of information aggregations and feedbacks so that the regime can maintain surveillance over the other.

Institutionalizing deliberative democracy is a third highlight in academia. The CCP's 18th National Congress has explicitly proposed the initiatives in various consultative and deliberative institutions and the institutionalization of a 'deliberative democratic system'. Studies on institutionalized consultation and deliberation have been in its heyday insofar. Li (2013), for example, claimed that important progresses have been made in facilitating the institutionalization of deliberative democracy in the last decades with the repositioning of the CPPCC as the *specialized* consultative body, as well as various local quasi-deliberative innovations. Bao (2014) proposed five principles for further institutionalizing deliberative democracy: namely, the people's democracy, diversification, equality and inclusiveness, multi-level promotion, and harmonious progress. Institutionalized deliberation is therefore linked with the governing capabilities. Nevertheless, in real practice, this top-down and pressure-type 'institutionalization' is a double-edged sword: it does facilitate a top-down surveillance by many official-background consultative and deliberative institutions it can nonetheless be counterproductive when imposing such institutionalization to some local settings. As indicated in the case observation in the fifth chapter, many modern procedural designs tend to be incompatible and irreconcilable with the traditional local political logic.

The fourth perspective refers to the deliberative culture. The 19th National Congress once again confirmed the need for developing a 'socialist deliberative democracy' and seeking more inspiration from Chinese traditional culture. Simultaneously, it also highlighted the idea of "further strengthening cultural confidence and promoting the prosperity of socialist culture"⁸⁷. This cultural heritage should be broadly understood: it not only includes cultural resources, but also some historical lessons and political experiences. Rao (2016), for example, claimed that there were three key origins of socialist deliberative culture: traditional Confucianism, Marxism and the CCP's ideology. This cultivation of a deliberative culture with *Chinese characteristics* accounts for the three dimensions of the citizen's deliberative consciousness, political participation, and deliberative system. This deliberation based on local culture contributes to the seemingly indigenized discourse and somehow alleviates problems of legitimacy due to the absence of competitive election in China.

Fifth, local/grassroots deliberation practices and experiments. The grassroots autonomy provides a freer political sphere for public deliberation, and the later booming participatory

⁸⁷Xi Jinping's talks on cultural confidence. QSTHEEORY. Available at: http://www.qstheory.cn/zhuanqu/bk/jx/2019-06/14/c_1124624754.htm. [Accessed 09 Jan. 2020].

devices and deliberative designs also confirmed how an indigenized deliberative idea is being practiced in everyday life. Academic publications in this realm are the most numerous and the easiest to reach without touching sensitive topics. Those observations cover a wide range of extension of geographic divisions, hierarchies and domains, and the authors' attitudes are relatively positive with regard to the deliberative practices carried out by the localities. These grounded studies depict quite a different picture from the regime-level consultation, as they hint at a bottom-up democratic path for China's democratization.

The last but not least perspective is the rather paradoxical relationship between the party leadership and deliberative democracy. Academic reinterpretations of this connection revolve around a special formulation in the report of the 19th CCP National Congress that 'deliberative democracy is an important way to achieve the party's leadership.' To summarize, normatively, the party's leadership guarantees the proletarian dictatorship from a (Chinese) Marxist perspective; also, mainstream academia accepts and approves this officially proposed democratic form to facilitate 'people's democracy' and provide good governance with a deliberative approach. More practically, from the historical experience to the modern governance, the deliberative method adopted by the CCP is used to achieve better intra/inter-party leadership (e.g. democratic parties) while keeping an eye on society. In a nutshell, the CCP's leadership on deliberative democracy is reinterpreted by mainstream studies as 'providing good governance' in the people's democracy framing.

Very uneven and rare, criticisms on this indigenized discourse do exist. Those rather oblique critiques may exist in the mainstream studies but mostly focus on some concrete issues. Instead of making grand statements, many authors prefer to burrow into a topic and stick to close-to-the-ground generalizations about what it might mean for China. More intuitive critiques can be found on deliberative procedures, quality, participants, feedback, decision-making, etc. These discussions rarely involve rather sensitive topics like democracy, political system, authoritarianism, one-party rule. Anyway, for a verifiable and long-lasting theory, an indigenized but uncritical theory always remains debatable, for instance, the efforts to reconcile the party leadership in deliberation with the official discourse and the further persistent defense for the coexistence of deliberation in authoritarianism. All these emerging political theories enrich the deliberative system, they must be wary of the misunderstandings of deliberation simultaneously.

5 Consultative/Deliberative Governance (*Xieshang Zhili* 协商治理) in China

A conceptual panorama is theoretically and ideologically helpful for the understanding of Chinese ‘deliberative democracy’ from the Western and domestic lens. This part applies this normative idea of consultative/deliberative governance to the Chinese practice. The last three decades have witnessed the transformation of China’s governance from chaos to an administratively efficient and highly institutionalized form. The phrase *good governance* reconciles public participation, consultation and sometimes deliberation rather than giving the priority to the competitive elections⁸⁸. The consultative/deliberative governance is becoming the mainstream in both China’s governance and democratic discourse with an official facilitation. Especially, many grassroots practices and experimentations have contributed much and further consolidated its positive role. They have become important platforms to observe Chinese authoritarian maintenance. In this part, I introduce several newly revisited concepts of government, (consultative/deliberative) governance in the different contexts both in democracies and authoritarian regimes, China, for example, to pave the way for the following empirical study.

5.1 In Search for Consultative/Deliberative Governance (*Xieshang Zhili* 协商治理) in Contemporary Politics

In the last three decades, democracies have faced the challenge of governance transformation; namely, a reexamination of the relationship between the government and civil society and the paradoxes between the strong government and public participation and deliberation. Those reflections point to deliberative governance and such an approach responds to two dilemmas: on the one hand, deliberative governance tries to deal with its conceptual underpinnings to the key challenges faced in its applications to an ever-increasing range of problems and issues (Dryzek, 2012); on the other hand, it deals with

⁸⁸The very latest report by the Roy and Lila Ash Center in Harvard University summarized three main dimensions of ‘policy-making’, ‘anti-corruption’ and ‘environmental protection’ in the Chinese governance with high public satisfaction, which further contributes to the authoritarian resilience and somehow responds to the deficits of the Western liberal democracy. Available at: https://ash.harvard.edu/files/ash/files/final_policy_brief_7.6.2020.pdf. [Accessed 11 Jan. 2020].

some poignant critiques in the representative governance. For the last decades, deliberative governance in liberal democracies has experienced a ‘discursive turn’ to plural venues, for example, in sustainable development (Elgert, 2011), democratic agencies (Erman, 2013), land use planning (Metze, 2010), and centrally formulated plans (Buizer and Van, 2012). In authoritarian China, deliberative governance mainly takes a government-led form, as well as some unstructured and informal types of public deliberation (Tang, 2015). These experiences bring the public to political activities, especially the informal types that entail continuous debates and contested discourses on the public’s concerns rather than the mere decision-making process.

5.1.1 Government and Governance: A Brief Distinction

In the English-speaking world, the term ‘government’ refers to the formal institutions of the state and their monopoly of legitimate coercive power. Government is characterized by its ability to make decisions and its capacity to enforce them (Stoker, 1998). This definition indicates a set of rather static institutionalizing process. If adopting a broader understanding of the government, as Hague and Harrop (2004) put forward, “it consists of all organizations charged with reaching and implementing decisions for the community”. In this sense, the public will to be bound by the government’s final decision or at best, should agree with a mechanism for resolving their disagreements. This organizational form is still considered to be an essential part of the normal functioning of society.

The term “governance” refers to a more dynamic process of governing. It involves a wide range of actors in the complex societal self-regulating (not just decision-making) process, which calls for a cooperation and coordination between the institutionalized government institutions and the private sector. Kooiman and Van (1993) stated that, “the governance concept points to the creation of a structure or an order which cannot be externally imposed but is the result of the interaction of a multiplicity of governing and each other influencing actors.” Among the different definitions, some discursive elements can be roughly extracted. Normatively, they refer to the representative and responsible government, the rule of law, and an absence of corruption (Bevir, 2010). In a more empirical sense, it mainly refers to the Anglo-American political theories of the formal institutions of the state and their monopoly of legitimate coercive powers, which is characterized by its ability to make decisions and its capacity to enforce them. Stoker’s (1996) five propositions on governance indicate a ‘paradigm shift’ with a perspective on

how distinct government and governance are in terms of functions and roles. He thus posits that governance constitutes a broader imagination than a government system. There are some new challenges to the traditional governance theory in a globalization era, like how to deal with the inter- and trans-national governance, such governance forms are bound by international norms and networks rather than domestic rules.

As for the latest studies, some new ideas like ‘democratic governance’, ‘good governance’ and ‘efficient governance’ also confirm these concerns and urge for revisiting the current rigid governance types both in authoritarian and democratic regimes. Interestingly, innovating and improving governance is easier to reach than a *democratic turn*, especially in the last decades, when Western democracies have lost confidence in the ability of their governments to directly manage economic production and welfare provision. These challenges seem to be handled well by some authoritarian states like China with an efficient and responsible governance. Nevertheless, this good governance has sometimes been at the expense of procedural justice and democratic requirements. This lens (rather than the platitudinous discussion on China’s democratic transition) motivated many revisions of the pillars of Chinese authoritarian continuum and how this good governance connects with the CCP’s legitimacy⁸⁹. Evidentially, many actors contribute to this good governance, and the consultative/deliberative governance is also considered to fulfill this role. This part goes further on how a consultative/deliberative governance approach constitutes a consolidated governance model in the interactions between and among the state and the public, and what nuances of such an approach are present in different political contexts.

5.1.2 Political Innovation of Consultative/Deliberative Governance

To begin with, most democrats (e.g. Habermas, 1994; Dryzek, 1990, 2000) think that the public sphere is the proper locus for deliberation, according to these authors and students working on democratic theories, civil society and the public sphere compose the foremost loci for public deliberation and deliberative democracy. Mark Warren (2004) nevertheless

⁸⁹The continuous legitimacy of authoritarian regimes is firmly connected with good governance. For instance, the legitimacy of Singapore’s People’s Action Party’s (ruling party) is derived from two sources: ‘performance legitimacy’ and ‘meritocracy’. The former refers to the authoritarian government providing its people with public good despite the absence of competitive and fair elections at regime level. These visible benefits boost public support and buy the ruling party’s legitimacy. Meritocracy refers to the officials’ selection criteria based on personal capacities rather than suffrage. Chinese experiences are learning some lessons from the ‘Singapore model’ with a focus on good governance and meritocracy and performance.

emphasizes that the potential positive roles of the state are underwriting, enhancing, and enabling even post-statist forms of the democracy. Democracy should however not seem to be exhausted by totally bottom-up forms, and a strong government may fulfill a positive role in deliberation. Therefore, a broader backdrop of consultative/deliberative practice is given in both democratic and authoritarian countries. For the latter, it provides some potential deliberative forms and governance featured with efficiency-oriented and functional forms in authoritarian regimes like China.

Faced with seemingly complex societies, an elected government is proposed to respond to crises and resolve the increasing interdependence of the societal actors with their diverse expression by managing the interactions between society and government to provide better governance. Modern governance is far from simply *ordering rule* (Hodges, 2005) and rigid management (Rhodes, 1996). New forms of governance put more emphasis on the interactions between the government and society with improved efficiency, effectiveness and democratic legitimacy of decision-making. These communicative interactions can shift the normative governmental models to more inclusive and legitimized decision-making. This turn is also considered as a refocus on popular sovereignty in modern governance.

Against this background, democrats advocate a dialogic and deliberative approach to modern governance and administration, inside of which decision-making should be made by citizens “mak[ing] sense together” (Allmendinger, 2002) and pass[ing] a deliberative process for further figuring out the individual preference (Rosenberg, 2007). In short, deliberative governance facilitates constructive conversations to avoid irrational outcomes and create a shared sense of the common good and thus for a better voting process (Bohman, 1998; Chambers, 2003; Hendriks, 2006). This combination of a deliberative approach with governance is a relatively recent idea; more often, deliberation is linked and designed to remedy the deficits of representative democracy rather than a governance model. Thus, the idea of deliberative governance may redraw the relationship between the government and the public, facilitate policy implementation and boost government legitimacy.

As deliberative democracy indicates, deliberation and societal dialogue are complementary to remedy the dysfunction of representative system (Chambers, 2003; Rosenberg, 2007). Also, an inclusive deliberative system, as many democrats argues, broadens the

understanding of the various communicative forms and common ground⁹⁰. They further facilitate a tranquil embedding of deliberation into governance and decision-making. As Chambers (2003) explains, political decision-making is legitimate insofar as it follows a process of public discussions and debates in which citizens and their representatives, going beyond self-interests and limited points of view, reflect on the public interests or common goods (see also Rehg and Bohman, 1996). If this deliberative turn can cast a more vibrant governance in modern society, then, how is like deliberative governance practice in real life? Mostly, besides those institutionalized and formal deliberative institutions and settings, legislative deliberation in parliament, for example, some deliberation and dialogue take place in the public sphere through various societal organizations and NGOs. This ‘two-track’ deliberation guarantees the public can be involved in the deliberative process both in societal interaction and political decision-making.

Nevertheless, a critical lens towards the aforementioned deliberative governance refers to its incompleteness (Fishkin, 1995; Buizer and Van, 2012), with insufficient in-depth information and the suppression of certain individual or groups. Deliberative governance is not a panacea, as it derives from simple personal preference collection in representativeness. Still, the normative assumptions and practical needs cannot fully fit all situations. As Fishkin (1995) writes, “no plausible democratic reform can bring us to the ideal speech situation...there only many changes that might take us a little closer than we are”. Some authors like Parkinson and Mansbridge, (Eds.). (2012), Niemeyer (2014) and Dryzek (2016) suggest to reconcile the deliberative system into deliberative governance, as such design can coordinate a deliberative method and other governance ways and functions. However, such assumptions also have to bear the same criticisms as those towards a ‘deliberative system’.

Another opportunity to reemphasize the importance of (deliberative) governance is the emerging of bad governance, which in turn leads to the democratic crisis⁹¹. Traceable clues

⁹⁰This umbrella concept of ‘deliberative governance’ definitely takes deliberation in the central place. Nevertheless, it also takes into consideration the legitimacy of collective decision making, representation, various forms of communication (rhetoric) and meta-consensus within this toolbox. That said, a deliberative approach should function jointly with others in an ecosystem. In this sense, those participatory and consultative forms and other rhetorical devices are contributed to a more comprehensive deliberative system and governance.

⁹¹Once again, to this critical perspective, various expressions have expressed such worries, such as ‘democratic decline’, ‘democratic recession’, ‘democratic collapse’, ‘democratic rollback’, ‘democratic disteroidal’, ‘democratic reversal’, etc. Those misgivings indicate the decline of democratic qualities and regimes. Also, this shadow is usually accompanied by the rise of authoritarianism. For more information, see issue 1, volume 26 in *Journal of Democracy* (January 2015), available at: <https://www.journalofdemocracy.org/issue/january-2015/>. [Accessed 27 Jan. 2015].

can be found in the debates in the special issue 'Is Democracy Declining?' in the *Journal of Democracy*. Democrats like Francis Fukuyama, Philippe Schmitter, Larry Diamond, Marc F. Plattner gave similar explanations on the rise of bad governance, which ultimately leads to, as Plattner (2015) observed, "lagging economic growth, poor public services, lack of personal security, and pervasive corruption, citizens of such countries understandably feel disappointed by democracy." Nevertheless, Anglo-American democrats and liberals may fail in two ways. Diamond (2015) claims bad governance affects mostly (though not all) nondemocratic countries and new democracies. If so, how to explain the governance incompetence in established democracies? Fukuyama (2015) contends that, "the legitimacy of many democracies around the world depends less on the deepening of their democratic institutions than on their ability to provide high-quality governance." This claim may downplay good governance and its link with legitimacy, especially, when faced with a voting-centered, partisan and competitive world politics. Therefore, good governance, for democracies can further fix democratic decline and weak economic performance. In authoritarian countries, such an approach can enhance regime legitimacy and public support. In this sense, authoritarian regimes sometimes perform better in providing public goods than democracies.

Despite the fact that good governance is not a primary idea in this part, a deliberative approach is analytically useful in thinking about the different type of deliberation operating in authoritarian setting, especially the adoption of more pragmatic deliberative techniques for good governance than those assumed by democratic theories (He, 2017). Indeed, the widespread establishment of various consultative and deliberative institutions in Chinese governments at all levels constitutes a more up-to-date governance model and hybrid regime type. Such a mixed type is commonly seen as the *key* to authoritarian resilience. Nevertheless, it is still unclear if such deliberative governance in China can further contribute to a governance-driven (top-down) (Warren, 2013; He, 2017) neo-authoritarianism or bottom-up (White, 1998; Moore, 2001; Li, 2003) democratization. So far, some successful cases have taken public reasons into the interaction amongst cadres and citizens. This is nonetheless far from providing sufficient evidence of the success of China's deliberative governance.

5.1.3 Consultative/Deliberative Governance (*Xieshang Zhili* 协商治理) in Chinese Authoritarianism

Pragmatic democrats have once again justified deliberation is not always the antagonist of authoritarianism, as authoritarian deliberation indicates (see He, 2006, 2011, 2016). Conversely, deliberation may travel more easily in some authoritarian countries like China, where the long-lasting Confucianism ideas of ‘discussion (*yi* 议),’ (Tan, 2014) and the ‘mass line’ from Mao to Xi emphasize communicative interactions between the public sphere and the empowered space. Also, a deliberative approach provides the CPP with more governance alternatives and innovations, rather than a representative and elective method. That said, in the idea of deliberative governance resonates a calling for the governance capacities to remedy the mess brought by weak and incapable governments. This logic explains that deliberation in authoritarian context more likely serves good governance in a controllable way, or for the collective and big goal. In this sense, pursuing inclusive, authentic and consequential deliberation in governance can be a by-product rather than a priority (see also Mansbridge *et al.*, 2012; Tang, 2014, 2015).

Ideally, deliberation functions jointly with other criteria of openness, inclusion, equality, transparency, and impartiality that are translated and contextualized in a governance system rather than partially stressed. According to Dryzek (2012), if all relevant actors are networked in governance, it will facilitate the transition of public space to empowered space. This idea is confirmed by Braithwaite (2007): “deliberative democracy is the ideal that can most fruitfully be deployed for enriching freedom as non-domination in the joint-governance”. Although a deliberative approach cannot achieve a decisive role in producing collective outcomes, it is still possible to develop some ideas about how the governance in practice may succeed or fail in deliberative terms.

Unfortunately, these discussions make it impossible to cast attention to the broader political context while still considering democracy as the indispensable condition for deliberative governance. Indeed, a deliberative approach offers a departure in many political contexts (Sanderson, 2002). For instance, the regimes that for whatever reason seem unlikely to adopt liberal electoral democracy may nevertheless develop a deliberative governance. Also, both democracies and authoritarian countries need public participation, consultation and deliberation for the public to accept public policies, enlist public support and assistance, rally public resources, boost public awareness and bypass a cumbersome

bureaucracy. Nevertheless, it is said that such participatory and deliberative process is easily manipulated in authoritarian context through some pre-designed settings. But interestingly, China's case indicates that cadres are more motivated with the deliberative method. According to Dryzek (2012), lacking the electoral or constitutional terms in authoritarian regimes, officials with a background in deliberative public space or strong willingness to carry out deliberative governance are more likely to be accepted by the public while it shields them from the impact of elections.

This top-down lens indicates that with the absence of competitive elections, the quality of authoritarian governance is tied to citizens' complaints (Botero, Ponce and Shleifer, 2013). Certainly, most of these complaints are not deliberative. Nevertheless, these hierarchical communicative interactions channel a way between leaders and citizens, ensuring underlying messages can be transmitted to the upper level. Also, according to Chen and Xu's (2014) quantitative research on public complaints through official consultative and deliberative institutions or some informal channels (e.g. petitions), more than half of the problems are properly resolved through deliberative methods. This pragmatic thinking facilitates a rather responsive government in one hand. It alleviates the pressure of large-scale collective actions on the other hand. This strategy proves to be feasible with the monopoly over consistent controllable uncertainties.

Besides this *functionalist* consideration, authoritarian regimes also firmly connect good (deliberative) governance with legitimacy. This connection is consolidated especially in non-Western-style-democratic regimes like China and Singapore. Yu Keping once concluded that, "good governance will be the most important source of the political legitimacy for human society in the twenty-first century." In his framing, regime legitimacy, economic achievements and social stability are connected within a *benign cycle* and co-contribute to good governance (with key characteristics of rule of law...participation and deliberation). This 'legitimacy transformation' based on 'good (deliberative) governance' may potentially serve as the main source of legitimacy for the CCP, especially when it is reluctant to embrace competitive elections. Nevertheless, more evidence is needed to further justify if legitimacy is defined as a state in which social order and public authority are voluntarily recognized and obeyed by the people. Then, it can be determined if it is enough to regard good governance as the equivalent of legitimacy or not.

The last yet superficial lens is that modern authoritarianism is also based on democratic political reforms. Deliberation can be existed in a society that far from state power's

interference. He and Warren's (2008) study on Chinese authoritarian deliberation both theoretically and empirically (with case studies) indicates this optimistic trend. Once again, this (broadly defined) deliberation and deliberative governance can certainly and sometimes efficiently function well in the Chinese localities, especially in the autonomous regions. It is also these seemingly bottom-up and democratic-like phenomena that have motivated many authors to imagine China's 'local democracy'. The aforementioned three dimensions of good governance, governance legitimacy and empirical feasibilities depict the deliberative governance in Chinese authoritarianism.

5.2 Chinese Party-State, Civil Society and Consultative /Deliberative Governance (*Xieshang Zhili* 协商治理)

This part focuses on the theories and realities of China's authoritarian deliberative governance through the lens of the relationship among the Chinese state, civil society and deliberative governance. Such a top-down and bottom-up perspective outlines a very paradoxical governance with a mighty state and a weak and deformed civil society. As a matter of fact, deliberative governance is far from a purely theoretical or merely symbolic regime reaction to this new idea. Conversely, China's contemporary governance is in a manner consistent with the values of *deliberative democracy*, even if hardly meeting the expectations of regime democratization. Nonetheless, the state's dual function of *strong monopoly* and *sponsorship* reshaped deliberation within controllable reach. This analysis is in line with state-society theory (see Unger and Chan, 1995; Brook, 1997; Chamberlain, 1998; Saich, 2000). This discourse is still the main analytical framework to explain the relation between Chinese state and society. There are increasing nuances and complexity in Chinese society, which leads to a more dynamic interaction between the state, civil society and some other social forces.

5.2.1 Chinese State and Consultative/Deliberative Governance (*Xieshang Zhili* 协商治理)

As authoritarian deliberation implies, the authoritarian power is mainly reflected in the authorities' control over the deliberative processes and outcomes, deliberative venues, methods and participants, for example. Quite different from the bottom-up and anti-elite deliberation in democracies, the powerful state plays an important role in the authoritarian

deliberation, and deliberative governance is often supported and monitored by a strong government⁹². Authorities have fixed these political discussions through laws, regulations or special consultative and deliberative institutions and infiltrated its influences within, thus turning deliberation into legal forms. Still, it seems, as Leib (2005) put forward, that albeit at some point the CCP maintained control through the rather smaller local work units, which were tightly controlled and were far from forums of deliberative freedom, it considers ways to devolve power away from centralized state party and create sites of deliberative freedom.

China is now taking seriously the potential inclusion of deliberation within its governmental structure. Most deliberative democrats are interested first and foremost in politics rather than social deliberation or some other apolitical foci. In China, nevertheless, it is different. Many authors are enthusiastic about China's local deliberative practices and seeming democratization possibilities, deliberation is more apolitical (e.g. grassroots deliberation is mainly interest negotiation⁹³). This corresponds exactly to the authorities' efforts to reshape China's deliberative democracy and public deliberative preferences and avoid political discussions (especially at regime-level). When looking into the large stock of practices, political topics can rarely be discussed.

To explain further, I thus go back to Warren's (2004) idea on the relationship between the state and deliberation: "democracy should not seem to be exhausted by its state-centric forms... the state may have some new functions in generating, supporting, and organizing democracy". As regards the more paradoxical link between authoritarian state and deliberation, the state-sponsored deliberation is mostly adopted to enhance the

⁹²For example, Xiang Biao's (2010) fieldwork thoroughly elaborated how the Chinese public shape their ideas towards the relationship between the state and society. Despite the consistent promotion of 'civil society', 'separation of the party and government (*dangzheng fenli* 党政分离)', and 'small government and large society (*xiaozhengfu dashahui* 小政府大社会)' in China's political propaganda, it seems Chinese ordinary people and societal groups still maintain a high degree of respect for a strong state, and are convinced that the 'state recognition' can somehow guarantee individual rights and interests instead of the formal individualistic public space. Conversely, they doubt that greater freedom and democratic rights can be restored outside the 'strong state'. This also explains from a bottom-up perspective why the state played an indispensable role in shaping Chinese people's political ideas. As a result, naturally, everyday political life is more easily subjected to the state.

⁹³Grassroots deliberation is mainly interest-based negotiations and compromise, according to the information provided by the *Social Blue Book* edited by the Institute of Sociology of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in recent years. Interest disputes and mass protests mainly occur at the grassroots level and are present in compensation for farmers' land occupation, demolition of urban houses, environmental pollution, medical disputes, etc. Nevertheless, those conflicts can be alleviated with social dialogue and deliberation among main stakeholders. Thus, it is quite necessary to facilitate the dialogue platform and interest-expression mechanism to truly embody the 'people' instead of 'officials' in deliberation.

authoritarian ruling capacities by providing good governance. This public good is based on governments' 'know best' about public needs after their participation and deliberation. To do so, most deliberative forms in Chinese context are attaching to governmental officials rather than entrusting to an independent body outside Chinese political institutions.

To justify the state's positive performance in facilitating deliberative governance, it mainly refers to state capacity to advance the deliberative scope and franchise. Such a 'legal transformation' of deliberation pushes the government to listen to, engage in and sometimes deliberate with the public. Although the coercions and presetting risk downplaying the deliberative quality, as He (2006) indicated, state-based deliberation cannot guarantee the authenticity of deliberation, thus lead to formalism and less genuine or robust communication (also see Fung and Wright, 2003). I argue that such top-down and state-promoted deliberation may not lead to further democratic consequences, more empowerment, cultivation of civil society, but rather to good governance. These short-term strategies have many purposes, even though they mostly serve authoritarian ruling.

5.2.2 Civil Society, Consultation, Deliberation and Governance

It seems ironic to talk about Chinese civil society, since the traditional and mainstream observers view authoritarianism as incompatible with civil society. Moreover, China's economic modernization has unleashed unprecedented changes on Chinese society but failed to bring about any fundamental changes to its authoritarian regime, thus cultivating a civil society or something like it⁹⁴. When talking about the Chinese civil society, first of all, both descriptive and indigenized definitions should be clarified. The formation of modern civil society in the West is closely related to the appearance of the "modern state" or what is termed as the "nation-state". Its fixed meanings are historically recontextualized. For example, a Tocquevillian civil society is a public sphere free of state interference and a curb on state tyranny. Bhikhu Parekh (2004) has an indigenized understanding of it: "rather than universalize the Western history and model of civil society and expect all

⁹⁴China's party-state authoritarianism assumes a firm link between the party and state, while society is the appendage to the state rather than independent. The Fourth Plenum of the 16th CPC Central Committee in 2004 proposed 'society building (*shehui jianshe* 社会建设)' for the first time. Then the political report of the 17th CCP National Congress tied the 'social building' doctrine with economic, political and cultural construction, which strongly indicates that society is no longer dissociated from the state.

others to conform to it, we need to take different views of it and appreciate its diverse forms. It is odd, even self-contradictory, to take a monistic view of the very area of life that is supposed to be the home of plurality.” In the Chinese context, civil society is reshaped by authoritarianism; the fragile public sphere indicates another picture of the unequal state-society interactions and, how civil society reinvents itself under control.

Initial discussions on Chinese civil society were academic. In the early 1990s, some scholars advocated a model of “interactive relations” between civil society and state (e.g. Gan, 1998; Li, 2002). They argued that the endogenous tensions of civil society would require the necessary but rational interferences of the state (Deng and Jing, 2002). Others called for a reconstruction of the “socialist civil society” (Yu, 1993) and a “strong state-strong society” model in Chinese context (Tang, 1996). These discussions enriched the understanding of Chinese civil society in an institutionalized way, improving the state-society relations with peaceable institutional reform. They however could not prevent the CCP’s authoritarianism, for instance, manipulations on some (semi)-official-background social organizations and NGOs. This strategy impedes the independent growth of civil society. To do so, the administrative corporatism (Heberer, 2005) with these societal forces is conducted in a top-down fashion to provide public good on one hand while keeping an eye on their actions on the other hand. In this formulation of Chinese civil society, the state overrides society with flexible controls: a stable society is more attractive and more controllable than a free and open society full of uncertainties.

Obviously, this prudent yet slowly advancing civil society reshaped the participation and deliberation within. Yu *et al* (2012) nevertheless assumed another link between the state and civil society based on the profound observations and case studies: namely, the interavailabilities and interdependences. This connection facilitates the careful blossoming of civil society through controlled participation and deliberation rather than *laissez-faire*. Such civil society however lacks spontaneous motivation for involvement, and in most cases, is subject to restrictions and surveillance. To many observers, the state-based and -cultivated civil society since the 1980s⁹⁵ indicates another positive sign: these cooperation and interactions between the state and society give an increasingly important role to play

⁹⁵According to Heberer, China’s *so-called* civil society is intertwined with state fostering. In the 1980s and 1990s, the CCP and state undertook the task of establishing an institutional framework and began to break the conservative barriers of the state and society to seek potential cooperation. In the 1990s, grassroots’ (rural and urban’s community) election and autonomy are the criteria for distinguishing the boundary between the state and society. After 2000, more and more societal organizations, groups, and NGOs were thus established, but mostly with official backgrounds.

to the latter in the public affairs, and the government is no longer the only source of civil power.

This state dominates and shapes social formation, but is sometimes present in weak forms. It is sometimes encouraged, and Teets' (2004) in her famous book of *Civil Society under Authoritarianism: The China Model*, puts forward the idea of 'consultative authoritarianism', which echoes the aforementioned incorporation of civil society into the state governance instead of an independent cultivation. On one hand, it allows the regime to cope with potential threats in this controllable society indirectly; on the other hand, as Chinese official discourse of 'consultative democracy' indicates, the 'consultation' has rich meanings. It can be designed in deliberative-like process and consultative in decision making. This toolbox includes information collecting, policy learning, responsiveness and good governance, etc. These seemingly positive factors are propelled by a powerful government. It seems that civil society is passively cooperating with the state to build a more stable and economically more competitive state.

My analyses attempt to unveil this core dimension of the relation and interaction between the state and civil society, and more precisely how a consultative and deliberative method functioned in this toolkit. In fact, incorporating civil society into the governance is not something new in authoritarian regimes. Russia, for example, also adopts such a method to improve governance by acting as channels through which information can be passed upwards, thereby providing some opportunities for incremental adjustments (O'Brien, 2016)". In this sense, civil society is regarded as another informal way of consultation by authoritarian regimes, which can better channel the societal information via various preset social institutions, thereby maintaining good governance and social order. This lens may inspire the rethinking of the democratic and governmental decline in Western democracies, as the question emerges whether democratic states may also seek to adopt some of the indirect control to identify and confront the rising challenges of populism, xenophobia and racism, etc.

6 Conclusion

In China, the growing voice on the reconstruction of Chinese indigenized political discourse is not surprising, given the sudden rise of China's economic power, which has inspired the official propaganda or intellectual discussions: for example, the 'four

confidences' proposed by Xi Jinping at the conference celebrating the 95th anniversary of the CCP foundation, namely, confidence in the Chinese path, theories, system, and culture. Understanding the indigenization of Chinese politics cannot be limited to debating on Westernization and indigenization; the CCP also has the ambition to market its political model (coined with *Chinese characteristic*) worldwide with its growing economic influence. Despite many criticisms, this indigenized perspective constitutes an important and internal insight into China's politics and should not be simply underestimated in the world politics.

As for the special issue of Chinese deliberative democracy, Chinese officials have adopted a more intuitive and unambiguous concept and explanation of 'consultative democracy' that clearly shows what the CCP means and wants. In the Chinese academia, intellectuals, whatever they are new leftists, liberals, or socialists with *Chinese characteristics*, are all constantly (re)interpreting their political claims based on the understanding of the West and China. They are working on China's current positioning, interactions with the rest of the world and expectations and visions for the future. Their efforts are bringing more indigenized Chinese discourses into sight. Chinese-style democracy may be the most provoking yet challenging discourse by providing a different democratic form not based on the competitive elections. Albeit this discourse has not been widely accepted and recognized by the West at this stage, it is highly praised by the mainstream domestic academia and facilitates a highlight of the propaganda of *Chinese characteristics*.

This two-dimensional analysis based on the official propaganda and academic discussions aimed at a comprehensive understanding of deliberative democracy in an indigenized perspective. Looking back at the CCP's revolutionary history, one can fairly say that, deliberation (*xieshang*, or any other related language formulation like deliberative-like *xieshang shi* politics, democracy and governance, as shown in a semantic analysis in this chapter) has an indigenized source in China. The CCP proscribes and prescribes the use of this term, for one hand, to distinguish it from the West (fill the void of the divergences between China and the West) while on the other hand, adding some new meanings to this concept to accommodate the CCP's authoritarian rule. In this sense, consultative democracy fit the best loci to explain the CCP's intention. More likely, this consultative democracy is further institutionalized and practiced in some special settings like the C/LPPCC and the United Front Work, for example. Intellectual discussions are more diverse, mainstream studies are positive and optimistic on this official discourse with consistent reinterpretations and defenses. It is still unknown what their real thoughts are

without proper academic freedom. They also have small-beer criticisms, nonetheless, more in-depth rethinking of China's authoritarianism and democratic discourse should be put on the agenda. In short, a more open yet unresolved question may that an indigenized approach has to take a broader comparative study on the deliberative and democratic concepts. It may also have to adopt some scientific methodologies, quantitative analysis, for example.

After all, a conceptual reappraisal of Chinese deliberative democracy in a comparative sense enhanced an empirical understanding on the consultative/deliberative governance. Modern governments in democracies and authoritarianism are committed to governance innovations and reforms for repatching the relationship between the public and representatives through a dialog-based communication. Such consultative and deliberative approach benefit for both sides, for it can enhance the legitimacy and democratic decision-making, simultaneously, public is also being valued in this process. Nevertheless, there are also differences between democracies and authoritarianisms. Authoritarian rulers favor more good governance based on controllable consultation and deliberation; when the public is indoctrinated and buys in such policies, authoritarianism is further consolidated. This logic can be further confirmed in the very entangled relationship between the CCP, government and civil society. Both the hierarchical government-led (top-down) consultative and local deliberative governance have highlighted the strong state's core and sometimes positive role in facilitating the limited inputs and its transformations to the good governance. Answers can be found in the rich empirical evidence in contemporary China (the fifth chapter).

Chapter Four: The Institutionalization of Consultation and Deliberation as A Tool for Authoritarian Rule



Image 1 The first plenary meeting of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (zhongguo renmin zhengzhi xieshang huiyi diyici quanti huiyi 中國人民政治協商會議第一次全體會議) 30.09.1949

Image 2 Group photo of the women representatives in front of *Huarentang* (懷仁堂). The first row from left to right He Xiangning, Song Qingling (Mrs. Sun Yat-sen), Deng Yingchao (Mrs. Zhou Enlai) 30.09.1949

Image 3 *Declaration of the First Plenary Session of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (Draft)* drafted by Mao Zedong 21.09.1949

1 Introduction

Whether in the context of democracy or authoritarianism, institutionalization is always a high-frequency keyword that connects with modernization and democratization⁹⁶. In his landmark explanation on ‘institutional theory’, Scott (1995/2001) identifies the definition of institutionalization as a synthesis of the arguments of earlier major theorists (Veblen, Durkheim, Weber): “a system of action is said to be institutionalized to the extent that

⁹⁶By institutionalization, I adopt a thicker definition as Fukuyama (2012) did when he analyzes China’s authoritarian institutionalization, which drawn some inspirations from Samuel P. Huntington’s (1968) *Political Order in Changing Societies*, it said, institutions are described as “stable, valued, recurring patterns of behavior”. To this understanding, Nathan’s (2017, 2019) *authoritarian resilience* have same things to say, this ‘highly’ institutionalization is complex, adaptable, autonomous, and coherent, it safeguards the CCP from every political change both domestic and abroad, while more vigilant than some other authoritarianisms and dictatorships like Mubarak in Egypt, Ben Ali in Tunisia, Qadhafi in Libya, and Kim Jong-Il in North Korea.

actors in an ongoing relationship oriented their action to a common set of normative standards and value patterns.⁹⁷” The processes of institutionalization account for some key questions like how patterns of domination and oppression become naturalized in the very institutions and elsewhere. China’s political institutionalization has developed rapidly in the last two decades. As regards institutionalized deliberative democracy, it inherited many political legacies of Chinese political consultation and mass line. Both the regime and local levels have established various forms of consultative and deliberative institutions and settings to pave the way for Chinese deliberative democracy and grassroots governance so far. Thus, this chapter follows an institutional clue for analyzing how China adopt its *functionalist*⁹⁸ side of deliberative democracy for serving the authoritarian purpose.

Albeit it is facing many questions and skepticism on Chinese deliberative democracy, this political discourse has undoubtedly been proved theoretically fit and empirically feasible in Chinese authoritarian context. The institutionalization of Chinese deliberative democracy has several implications: firstly, it is in accordance with the general trend of institutionalization in modern polities, that is, towards a standardized and modern governance. Secondly, it indicates the CCP’s efforts to institutionalize and legitimize its authoritarian rule via various well-designed institutions (it is not, in my claim, democratic public empowerment). Against this background, this chapter firstly reexamines the evolutionary trajectories of various consultative and deliberative institutions after the establishment of the CCP. From 1921 to the present, two historical periods are highlighted: partisan cooperation and consultation in the CPPCC (1921-1978), as well as the political consultation to deliberative governance (1978-Present). Secondly, I disentangle the firm linkage between institutionalization of consultation and deliberation and authoritarian consolidation.

What are the features and how does this authoritarian institutionalization of Chinese deliberative democracy work? Firstly, this process is linked with some other indigenized political discourses and settings, Chinese democracy, for example; secondly, various consultative and deliberative institutions are designed for information collecting and surveillance, the C/LPPCC, for instance, being the main venue for political consultations

⁹⁷Barley and Tolbert (1997). Institutionalization and Structuration: Studying the Links between Action and Institution. *Organization Studies*, 18(1), 93-117.

⁹⁸Alexander (1983) and Silverman (1970) pointed out that institutionalization *per se* is instrumental-oriented, thus, in order to avoid the complete instrumentalism, remedies may emphasize more on the role of interests, instrumental action and/or rational choice.

amongst the CCP and other democratic parties, seldom involving authentic deliberation. But this institutional setting nonetheless renders the one-party rule more tranquil and acceptable; thirdly, there are great variations in terms of deliberative quality (deliberativeness) in different consultative and deliberative institutions. The CPPCC is defined as a specialized consultative body in Chinese political settings, deliberative quality is hierarchically declined from the local level to the central level. Usually, the CCP's leadership overrides the other democratic parties (inside/outside the L/CPPCC), and these interactions are always criticized as mere 'information collection'. As for some flourishing participatory budgets cases in the last three decades, mostly, they are neither consultative nor deliberative, but only designed for the public participation. Nevertheless, many observers agree that authentic deliberation can be found in Chinese autonomous areas, villages, for example.

It is fair to conclude that institutionalization of deliberative democracy in Chinese context promotes and facilitates China's modernization and authoritarianism simultaneously. To this sense, different institutions have participatory, consultative and deliberative functions in a quite hybrid way, and they are methodologically adopted to consolidate a resilient authoritarian regime. These institutionalized efforts, at least in this stage, are proved and maintained stably. To be clear, I respectively reexamine the participation, consultation and deliberation in various institutions and their institutionalization. This analytical framework refers to a comparative study in the hierarchical, power-relation and geographical sense on many practices (also presented in the fifth chapter). Rather than lost in a conceptual ambiguity, this differentiation facilitates a more concrete focus on these institutions and institutionalization.

2 The Institutionalization of Chinese Participation, Consultation and Deliberation in China from 1921 to Present

Evolution of consultative/deliberative democracy in China has gone through a tortuous historical process. There was no conceptual use of *consultative* and *deliberative* and democratic forms in the very beginning. These ideas were scattered amongst various practices and experiments. During the New-Democratic Revolution, a *united front* working method was formed within the cooperation between and among the CCP and some other parties and nonpartisan elites. For example, the 'triangular organization (*sansan zhi* 三三制)' during

Yan'an period have already pioneered the combination of elections and consultations. In 1948, from the *Mayday Slogan* (*wuyi kouhao* 五一口号) issued by the CCP Central Committee to the preparation of the 'New Political Consultative Conference (*xin zhengxie* 新政协)', Mao's idea of 'getting as much unanimity as possible' facilitated a transition of non-institutionalized and unstructured communication to the organizational forms. After the NPC convened in 1954, the CPPCC also realized a transition from the 'state authority' to the *single* and *main* 'consultative' body. Nevertheless, at this stage, class struggle ideology was still dominant within the deliberative thinking.

In 1978, after the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee, the basic political system of 'NPC, multi-party cooperation under the CCP's leadership and the CPPCC' has undergone some fundamental changes, thus laying the foundation of the "two sessions (*lianghui* 两会)" tradition. This formulation of the 'two democratic types of election and consultation' in 1991 constitutes a prototype of the Chinese democratic discourse. It was later incorporated in the CCP's *No.5 document* by the CCP Central Committee in 2006⁹⁹. The *White Paper on Chinese Political Parties* issued by the State Council Information Office in 2007 officially confirmed the two conceptions of 'consultative democracy' and 'election democracy' and proclaimed the two major democratic forms are the advantages of socialist democracy. In 2011, the *Report on the Implementation of the CCP Central Committee on Strengthening the Work of the People's Political Consultative Conference* issued by the Party Committee of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference incorporated 'consultative democracy' into the Party's documents in the General Office of the CPC Central Committee. In 2012, consultative democracy was thus integrated in the official doctrine with a political and theoretical sense through the most authoritative organ of the Congress of Party Representatives in the 18th CCP National Congress.

Thereafter, Chinese democratic discourse on a combination of consultation and election has been given both ideological, methodological, and systematical nature in contemporary Chinese politics. From the neo-democratic consultation to the socialist consultation, then to the consultative democracy with *Chinese characteristics*, it has completed an indigenized

⁹⁹See the General Office of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, the Document Research Office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China. *Selected Documents of the People's Political Consultative Conference (Part 2)* (2009), Beijing, Central Document Publishing House, China Literature and History Press.

transition. Following this logic, the institutionalization of consultative democracy insofar, as well as consultative, participatory and deliberative institutions present a way that how consultation and deliberation embed in Chinese politics. On closer examination, these institutions function respectively in different realms, hierarchies, occasions that ultimately contribute to a more solid authoritarian system. Therefore, this institutional analysis can never be underestimated. For example, like many authors do, to disregard the window-dressing of the CPPCC's consultative institutions undoubtedly simplify the complexity of China's authoritarian resilience and maintenance. Therefore, the institutionalization of consultative/deliberative democracy in China depicts another very image of how this institutional division of labor of participation, consultation and deliberation consolidates China's authoritarian resilience.

2.1 Participation, Consultation and Deliberation from 1921 to 1978

At this historical stage (1921-1978), there emerged many deliberative practices. Typical examples are the partisan consultation and deliberation between the CCP and the Kuomintang, and the deliberation between the CCP and the democratic parties before and after the founding of the People's Republic of China. At this early stage, these practices are generally defined as fair 'deliberation' in the Chinese language context. They may not be qualified as deliberation in the modern sense, but since the CCP at that time was not the ruling party, equal and fair deliberation can be found in such intra- and inter-partisan interactions. These ideas and practices laid foundations for China's basic political system of 'multi-party cooperation and political consultation system under the CCP's leadership' and China's democratic discourse.

2.1.1 Inter-Party Cooperation to the CPPCC (1921-1949)

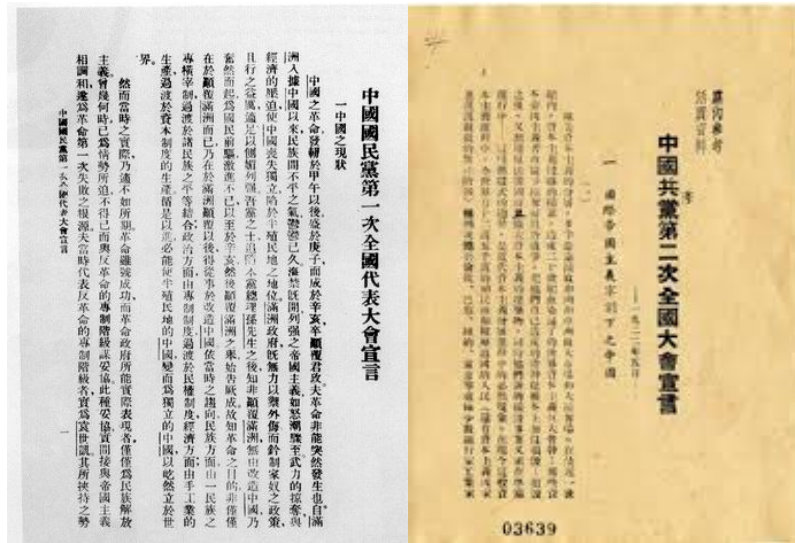


Image 4 Declaration of the First National Congress of the Chinese Kuomintang (*zhongguo guomindang diyici quanguo daibiaodahui xuanyan* 中國國民黨第一次全國代表大會宣言) 23.01.1924 Guangzhou

Image 5 Declaration of the Second National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party (*zhongguo gongchandang diyici quanguo daibiaodahui xuanyan* 中國共產黨第二次全國代表大會宣言) 16-23.07.1922 Shanghai

The CCP refused to cooperate with the bourgeoisie at the beginning of its establishment in 1921. Later, in 1922, after the second National Congress, the CCP decided to “invite democratic parties such as the Kuomintang, as well as other societal groups for several joint-meetings...establishing a democratic united front¹⁰⁰” based on the *Marxist United Front theory* and practical needs. Those intra-party documents, for example, the ‘*Resolutions on Democratic United Front*’, ‘*CCP’s Claims on the Current Situation*’, indicated that partisan ‘joint meeting’ and political consultations can be carried out within multi-party cooperation to strike down feudal warlords and achieve democratic republics.

During the partisan cooperation from 1924 to 1927, some superficial political deliberation was indeed held, albeit this fragile cooperation was lately broken in the 7·15 incident in 1927. At the very beginning of the Anti-Japanese War, *A Letter to All Compatriots for the*

¹⁰⁰See CCP’s Claims on Current Situation, see *Selected Documents of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (Volume 1)* (1987). Party School Press of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China. 44-45.

*Salvation of the Nation and Against Japan*¹⁰¹ released on August 1, 1935 was calling for an end to the Kuomintang's one-party dictatorship based on the national common interest. For this purpose, the National Senate, as a temporary power organ, was established in July 1938 by the National Government (i.e. the Kuomintang), with the involvement of the CCP, representatives of those anti-Japanese democratic parties and nonpartisan actors. This special institution played the role of the highest advisory body for the temporary purpose of national conflict. But it was doomed to fail because of consistent partisan infights. Also, no real agreements could be made due to different claims among these parties (including the CCP and Kuomintang). This advisory- and consultative-based organ was dismissed during the Civil War.

In 1954, Mao proposed a two-step strategy for the democratic state-building plan in the statement of *On the United Government* by holding an inter-party conference as the first step, before carrying out national elections conditionally. Suffrage was a rather utopian idea in China at this stage with the very premature representative body (the NPC has not been established yet) and electoral condition, though. Nevertheless, this strategy contributed to a draft of the *union government* and facilitated the signing of the 'Double Ten Agreements' in Chongqing after the two parties' deliberation, which proposed the basic consensus that the national election should be followed by a 'political consultative meeting'¹⁰². This idea of 'political consultation' was later scrapped in the 'National Assembly' by the Kuomintang. Due to the antagonisms between the two parties, the CCP proposed another consultative conference unilaterally after the disintegration of the Kuomintang-sponsored conference during the Civil War in 1946. Mao's statements in the *Report at the Second Plenary Session of CCP's Seventh Central Committee* of "the establishment of a pro-class-led peasant-democratic dictatorship based on the workers-peasants alliance in coalition government" facilitated the first plenary session of the CPPCC in Beijing in September 1949. Then, the CPPCC became the highest state power organ after the enactment of the *CPPCC Common Program*.

From the founding of the Communist party in 1921 to the establishment of New China in 1949, the Civil Wars between the Kuomintang and CCP (1927-1937, 1945-1949) and the Anti-Japanese War (1938-1945) were interspersed with the fissions and fusions amid those

¹⁰¹See 'A Letter to All Compatriots for the Salvation of the Nation and Against Japan' issued by the Chinese Soviet Central Government and the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on August 1, 1935, published in the 'Salvation Time' on October 1, 1935.

¹⁰²See 'Minutes of the Talks between the National Government and the CCP Representatives' in October 1945.

main bodies like the CCP, Kuomintang, democratic parties, societal groups, organizations, nonpartisans, etc. The tortuous partisan cooperation, consultation and deliberations have brewed China's special political system based on a multi-party cooperation (with the CCP as the ruling party). This 'third way', in the official framing, was different from the Kuomintang's despotism and the Western separation of powers. This political framework adheres to the principle of the CCP leadership as its core while permitting the democratic parties' participation and consultation and the CPPCC was able to survive after completing its historical mission in 1949 and to constitute a crucial 'symbolic' part to Chinese political system.

2.1.2 Stagnation of Consultation in Political Movements (1949-1978)



Image 6 Founder of new China Peng Dehuai was denounced during the Cultural Revolution 1966

Image 7 Second Secretary of the CPC Heilongjiang Provincial Committee Li Fanwu was denounced during the Cultural Revolution 1966

When the NPC was held from 1949 to 1956, the CPPCC functioned dually as the Chinese People's Democratic United Front Organization and the highest organ of state power. After 1956, the CPPCC's remaining or removing triggered an intra-party swordplay. These debates stemmed from a rethinking of China's social nature. The 'Common Program (*gongtong gangling* 共同纲领)' represented a 'new democratic regime' but the Constitution of the People's Republic of China (1954) (hereafter *May 4th Constitution*) was based on socialism¹⁰³. The CPPCC had to be abolished because of its inextricable relationship with the 'coalition government (product of the new democratic revolution)'. Nevertheless, Mao

¹⁰³In the new government established in 1954, albeit a 'coalition government' was still retained, non-party leaders were all purged from the positions of vice president and vice premier of the State Council.

argued that the CPPCC could be a very *symbol* of democracy and it should be maintained indefinitely. Later in 1956, those democratic parties were integrated into the CPPCC's design. In the same year, Mao's speech of 'On the Ten Major Relationships' at the *Enlarged Meeting of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee* proclaimed the principle of 'long-term coexistence and mutual supervision' among the CCP and other democratic parties. This rule was later confirmed in the 8th CPC National Congress, as Mao put, "is it better to have one party or several parties?...partisan cooperation can be upheld as a principle in the past and also in the future¹⁰⁴".

But this harmonious relationship did not last long, only between 1957-1979. The partisan cooperation and political consultation were harshly destroyed and stagnated due to the expansion of 'anti-rightist (*fanyou* 反右)' struggle and the Cultural Revolution. This 'anti-rightist' struggle was mainly targeted at those democratic party intellectuals during the 'anti-revolutionary (*sufan yundong* 肃反运动 mainly in 1955)' and 'rectification (*zhengfeng yundong* 整风运动 1957-1958)' movement in 1955. Such infights were launched to avoid the riots in Hungary and Poland¹⁰⁵. Later in 1956, Mao's proposal of 'letting a hundred flowers bloom, a hundred schools of thought contend' indicated another ideological remoulding of Chinese intellectuals. This strategy thus alienated dissenters from democratic parties and consolidated those more prone to allegiance to the CCP simultaneously. This fanaticism for the one-party dictatorship (Mao and other opportunists), as well as the prevailed 'Rash Advance (*maojin*, 冒进)' economic policies ultimately led to political chaos and disorders, and led to the miserable livelihood of the public during the Great Leap Forward between 1958 and 1962.

The party committees, United Front Work Departments and C/LPPCCs were paralyzed in the ensuing national Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). Political consultations were thus jeopardized under the strong political mobilization and populism. If the aforementioned 'anti-rightist' struggle was aimed at those dissenting democratic parties, then the Cultural

¹⁰⁴Selected Readings of Mao Zedong's Works (1986). Beijing, People's Publishing House. 2, 733. In September 1957, *Resolution on the Political Report of the Eighth National Congress of the Communist Party of China* adopted in the Eighth National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party and stated that, "We must continue to strengthen the cooperation between and among the CCP and other democratic and non-partisan parties and give full roleplay to the CPPCC organizations at all levels".

¹⁰⁵In June 1956, the demonstrators were severely suppressed in 'Poznański Czerwiec' in Poland. Gomulka, who was purged in the former political infight came to power and became the first secretary of the Communist Party of Poland; meanwhile, in Hungary, the party's first secretary, Lakosi, was forced to resign when faced with the nationwide protests. These two events prompted Mao to end liberalization and launch an anti-rightist struggle in China.

Revolution was targeting ‘capitalist roaders within the party (*zouzi pai* 党内走资派)¹⁰⁶. There were few dissidents left in democratic parties after this brutal political movement and the Cultural Revolution imperatively purged party leaders like Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping that filled intellectuals and the bourgeoisie with dread¹⁰⁷. Inter-party democracy became a hypocritical topic in the Cultural Revolution, the decade-long totalitarian gloom, and the mass political movements and class struggle triggered the regression of Chinese politics during at least a decade.

The convening of the CCP 11th National Congress in August 1977 declared an end to the Cultural Revolution. In October of the same year, the CCP’s Central Committee issued the directive on the ‘*Request for Patriotic and Democratic Parties*’ (formulated by the United Front Work Department). It reemphasized and rejuvenated the United Front Work, after which China’s consultative politics returned to the scene. In February 1978, the CCP and other democratic parties co-held the first meeting of the Fifth National Committee of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference in Beijing and then adopted the ‘*Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference Bylaws*’. The CPPCC once again functioned against such background. At this stage (1949-1978), Mao instigated several mass movements in order to reconsolidate the one-party dictatorship and even the personality cult. There was no private (public) sphere left for public deliberation, and the state consultative organs like the CPPCC were also paralyzed. Nevertheless, the legacy at this period is: Mao’s mass line (a firm link with the mass) and political mobilization is necessary but never for an autocratic purpose; the CCP’s ruling status can only be consolidated with the full participation and consultation of those democratic parties through some institutionalized institutions like the CPPCC.

Mainstream thinkers tend to deny any political achievement at this chaotic period; nonetheless, some rudimentary political ideas reshaped some basic concepts of political

¹⁰⁶*Decision on the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution*’ adopted by the 11th Plenary Session of the Eighth Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party (i.e., Article 16).

¹⁰⁷The decade-long Cultural Revolution led to three major purges. The first stage from 1966 to 1969 aimed at heads of the central and provincial parties and governments represented by Deng Xiaoping and Liu Shaoqi, as well as some intellectuals and senior military cadres. From 1969 to 1971, Lin Biao and Chen Boda were persecuted and removed from the party. The partisan and government cadres headed by Deng Xiaoping and national leadership candidate Zhou Enlai (Zhou Enlai died in January 1976 without being purged) were the main targets from 1974 to 1976 in the third stage. In this special decade, ideological unification, the suppression of dissidents and the personality cult devastated the former partisan consultation and cooperation as general political principles. Even in contemporary China, the intellectuals and democratic parties still have scruples about their free expression and deliberation because of the shadow of authoritarianism.

participation, consultation and deliberation in contemporary China. More importantly, they provided some valuable lessons, especially from 1949 to 1966: for example, broad participation should be based on class-alliance, political consensus should be derived from the collective interests, and party leadership should adopt a mass line method. Today's conception of Chinese deliberative democracy is mostly based on this legacy (both concepts and practices).

The founding of New China opened a new chapter in the dictatorship of the proletariat, political participation requires a broad alliance with all the people¹⁰⁸. That said, the CCP accepted and allowed the cooperation and alliance with the others (democratic parties). Nevertheless, they themselves should not oppose the party's leadership and socialism. In the communist doctrine, the CCP leadership was conceived as the vanguard (representative) of the proletariat via its professional superiority. This leading role means the party must regularly discuss and decide major principles and policies. The party exercises constant supervision over the work of the state organ and the party will assume a leading role in all public affairs (Townsend, 1967). This point highlights the reconciliation of the CCP's leadership and the institutionalized alliance, as the CCP insists in the contemporary China's politics.

An examination on the more important doctrine of the 'mass line' indicates that, such a method is twofold with 'reliance on the mass' and 'making collective decisions based on the mass'. The consistency with today's consultative approach refers to how the scattered and unsystematic voices of the masses are being collected for the reference of the final decision and execution ('going to the mass 到群众中去'). The mass line first of all indicates an extensive mass participation in the political process (but in the Cultural Revolution, such an approach becomes a totally top-down political mobilization). Such participation is then reprocessed and redistributed to consultation and deliberation in a controlled way. As Townsend (1967) put, this participation is designed to produce popular execution of policy rather than popular formulation and control of policy. It is more likely being reinterpreted in modern China with participatory consultation in the policy-making process.

¹⁰⁸The 'people', in Mao's framing, refers to "the working class, the peasantry, the urban petty bourgeois...those who enjoy the rights of free of speech, assembly, association, etc." See Mao, Z. (1949). *On the People's Democratic Dictatorship*. 417-418.

The last takeaway is that a political consensus should be reached based on collective interests through various institutions. This doctrine casts a long shadow on the general concept of deliberative democracy in contemporary China. The CCP proclaimed and legitimized its leadership on the representation of the collective and general interests, namely, the national interests during the resistance to Japan (1938-1945) and class interests after 1949. In this sense, collective interests are superior to any partial and individual interests (albeit the CCP defends the masses' interests, which in its propaganda is a guarantee of the individual interests). The idea of collectivism assumes an unequal relation between the individual and the collective in the political sphere, which also influences the public's thinking and processing in dealing with the interactions between and among the individual and the collective. Nevertheless, this consensus is more likely reached based on a top-down ideological and political mobilization rather than a bottom-up spontaneous participation and deliberation. For example, the case of the Cultural Revolution strongly indicates how this collectivism and basic consensus failed and developed in a rebellious way. In a nutshell, although Chinese politics was in chaos at this stage, both the CCP and the Chinese people have learned how to rebalance the relationship between participation, consultation, deliberation and regime stability.

2.2 Political Consultation/Deliberation (*Zhengzhi Xieshang* 政治协商) to Consultative/Deliberative Governance (*Xieshang Zhili* 协商治理) in China (1978-Present)

Before and after the reform and opening up in 1978, the domestic turmoil was basically brought to an end, political 'rectification to restore order' was put on the agenda. During this important stage, China's basic political system began to gradually stabilize. Albeit this one-party model with a strict control on free of speech and the media is consistently challenged by the Western liberal democracy, as well as some domestic protests (e.g. the Tiananmen Massacre in 1989 crushed a social movement calling for anti-corruption and democratization). Therefore, a neo-authoritarian current emerged (see Yun, 1990; Petracca and Xiong, 1990; Sautman, 1992; Perry, 1993) in the 1990s in which partisan cooperation and consultation were formed and maintained a fragile balance.

2.2.1 Multi-Party Cooperation and Reconstruction of the CPPCC (1978-2012)



Image 8 *Opinions on Upholding and Improving the Multi-party Cooperation and Political Consultation System under the Leadership of the Communist Party of China* (guanyu jianchi he wanshan. Zhongguo gongchandang lingdao de duodang hezuo he zhengzhi xieshang zhidu de yijian 關於堅持和完善中國共產黨領導的多黨合作和政治協商制度的意見) 12.1989

Image 9 *Opinions on Strengthening the Construction of the Multi-party Cooperation and Political Consultation System under the Leadership of the Communist Party of China* (guanyu jinyibu jiaqiang zhongguo gongchandang de duodanghezuo he zhengzhi xieshang hidu jianshe de yijian 關於進一步加強中國共產黨領導的多黨合作和政治協商制度建設的意見) 03.2005

After the reform and opening up in 1978, the CCP began to ‘rectify and restore order’ for the wrong positioning of the democratic parties and the CPPCC. Deng Xiaoping stated that, “democratic parties are all political forces that serve for the socialism under the CCP’s leadership”¹⁰⁹. In September 1982, former president Hu Yaobang emphasized in the report of the 12th CCP National Congress, “our party must continue adhering to the principles of the ‘long-term coexistence and mutual supervision’ and ‘treating each other with all sincerity and sharing weal and woe’”. The report of the 13th CCP National Congress also clearly stated that the system of multi-party cooperation and political consultation led by the CCP was the basic political system in China, and it facilitated the social consultation and dialogue system. To note, as of August 1982, the democratic parties had developed a total of more than 35,000 new members and 4,000 grassroots organizations¹¹⁰.

¹⁰⁹See Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping (1994). Beijing: People’s Publishing House, 2, 186.

¹¹⁰In the very beginning of the founding of new China in 1949, there were 11,540 members from all democratic parties. Nevertheless, only four democratic parties had more than 1,600 members: the China Democratic National Construction Association (zhongguo minzhu jianguo hui 中国民主建国会), the Revolutionary Committee of the Chinese Kuomintang (zhongguo guomindang geming weiyuanhui 中国国民党革命委员会), the China Democratic League (zhongguo minzhu tongmeng 中

The report of the 13th CCP National Congress for the first time proposed this political consultation system (*zhengzhi xieshang zhidu* 政治协商制度), which once again confirmed Deng Xiaoping's previous idea of calling for a multi-party cooperation system. In December 1989, the CCP Central Committee issued the *Opinions on Adhering to and Improving the Multi-party Cooperation and Political Consultation System under the Leadership of the Chinese Communist Party* (hereafter Document 14) and stated that, "the democratic parties are participatory parties (*canzheng dang* 参政党)". Thereafter, the political status of those democratic parties was clearly redefined that distinguished from the opposition in the liberal settings. The Document 14 stated eight principles for the formulation of the China's consultative system, (1) . . . (6) democratic parties participate in the NPC, people's government, court, and procuratorate; (7) the CPPCC is the *main* political platform for democratic consultation; and (8) strengthen the construction of democratic parties.

In 2005, the CCP Central Committee issued the '*Opinions on Strengthening the Multi-party Cooperation and Political Consultation System under the Leadership of the Chinese Communist Party*' (hereinafter Document 5) which also stated that, "political consultation should be taken into the decision-making process"¹¹¹. In February 2006, '*Opinions on Strengthening the Work of the People's Political Consultative Conference*' (hereafter Opinions) issued by CPC Central Committee underlined, "the exercise of people's rights through elections and voting, and full consultation amongst all parties before major decision-making, and consensus on common issues as far as possible are two very important forms of socialist democracy in China"¹¹². Document 5 and Opinions highlighted the role played by consultative democracy in the national decision-making process and its political functions, therefore constituting the basic political system in China-one-party ruling with the democratic parties' participation and consultation.

The *Opinions of the CPC Central Committee on Strengthening the Work of the CPPCC* issued in 2006 explained the relationship between the CPPCC and consultative democracy. In fact, this *Opinions* expand the frontier of the consultative institutions (not only limited to the

民主同盟), and Chinese Peasants and Workers Democratic Party (*zhongguo nonggong minzhu dang* 中国农工民主党). The remaining democratic parties had less than two hundred members.

¹¹¹Document Research Office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, *Selected Documents of the 16th National Congress of the CPC (2006)*. Beijing: People's Publishing House, 677.

¹¹²This is a more comprehensive expounding of the relationship between elections and consultation and the consultative forms of democracy in the official framing. See Document Research Office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, *Selected Documents of the 16th National Congress of the CPC (2006)*. Beijing: People's Publishing House, 261.

CPPCC). Later, some other consultative institutions are reaffirmed via party documents: for instance, ‘*Opinions of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party on Consolidating and Strengthening the United Front Work in the New Century and New Stage*’ that reiterates the organizational structure of the United Front Work. The main consultative institutions are working conjointly “to promote friendship with other countries and in the struggle for socialist modernization and for the reunification and unity of the country”¹¹³. Another lens refers to the transformation of consultative democracy that is embedded in the ‘social management structure (2004)’ to the ‘social management system (2012)’, then to the ‘social governance system (2013)’¹¹⁴ (a governance turn). Nuances in these expressions indicate that consultative democracy is embedded piecemeal in the state modern governance system with the design of “party leadership, government responsibility, social coordination, public participation, legal safeguard and science and technology support”¹¹⁵.

2.2.2 Modern Consultative/Deliberative Governance and Beyond (2012-present)



¹¹³Preamble to the Chinese Constitution, available at: http://www.gov.cn/english/2005-08/05/content_20813.htm. [Accessed 24 Dec. 2018]. However, neither the formal structure nor the functionality of the C/LPPCC is defined by the Constitution.

¹¹⁴In September 2004, the Fourth Plenary Session of the 16th CCP Central Committee proposed the establishment of the social management pattern with the ‘party leadership, government responsibility, social coordination, and public participation’, which indicated that the party’s leadership will not only rely on the strengthening of party’s control and government’s responsibility. This refers to the incorporation of the bottom-up public participation and consultation. In November 2012, the Eighteenth CCP National Congress upgraded this ‘social management structure’ to the ‘social management system’ and incorporated with the ‘legal safeguard’. The Third Plenary Session of the Eighteenth CCP Central Committee in November 2013 replaced the ‘social management system’ with ‘social governance system’ and dedicated a chapter to deploy the ‘innovative social governance system’ with the public consultation. For the first time the CCP proposed the concept of ‘social governance system’ rather than the top-down-style of management, which has later proved to enrich the connotation of consultative politics and governance in China.

¹¹⁵Work Report of the 19th National Congress, October 2017, available at: <http://www.12371.cn/special/19da/bg/>. [Accessed 11 Dec. 2019].

Image 10 Residents' deliberative meeting in *Shuixiu* Community, Wuxi, Jiangsu Province

Image 11 Honest talk in Xinglong Street of Dongying, Shandong Province

After the 18th CPC National Congress, both the official discourse and academia have dedicated more energy to a more comprehensive understanding of consultative democracy. For instance, academic research flourishing and accounts for 80% discussions after the 18th National Congress in 2012. This rising academic enthusiasm indicates another focus of the institutionalization (*zhidu hua* 制度化) and systematization (*tixi hua* 体系化) of China's consultative democracy. In 2012, in an important speech commemorating the 65th anniversary of the establishment of CPPCC, Xi fine-tuned the repositioning of the CPPCC from an 'exclusive body' and 'main body' to 'important body', finally setting the tone of the 'specialized body' of Chinese consultative democracy. These very rhetorical changes indicate a consensus had been made on the CPPCC being the specialized (though sole) political consultation body, which had to work with other consultative forms. This was reaffirmed in the 19th CPC National Congress to facilitate the consultative system with 'wide, multi-layered, and institutionalization'. Also, the CPPCC's function should be rebalanced from mere 'political consultation' in the early stage to the other two missions of 'democratic supervision' and 'political participation' in the new era.

Followingly, in 2015, the CCP Central Committee successively issued four important documents and made a specific agreement to further strengthen the socialist consultative democracy at different levels and venues. The Report of Nineteenth NPC in 2017 reemphasized the importance of developing consultative governance in China's modernization and make major deployments for a 'systemic turn' of consultation. This trend is more in line with China's democratic discourse of 'people's democracy' and 'the centrality of the people' in the party's propaganda, "the process of people's participation in consultation and deliberation...is the embodiment of the people being the masters"¹¹⁶. For the last two decades, China's grassroots party organizations and governmental departments have been constantly committed to political innovation in governmental methods, facilitating various forms of consultative, sometimes deliberative governance practices. Chinese government has also introduced the public hearing and participatory budgeting to reduce social protests and strengthen the government's ruling capacities.

¹¹⁶Xi, J. (2017). *Xi Jinping's Talks about Governing the State*. Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, p.2.

After the 19th CCP National Congress, consultative democracy has revolved around ‘the modernization of the national governance system and capacity’. It is embedded in the practical extension of the institutionalization of consultation. Institutionalized consultation (sometimes with deliberative influence or being called deliberation) is endorsed a way to mobilize and ensure public participation and engagement. These institutions and institutionalized consultations are, for instance, the legislative consultations (legislative bodies, N/LPC, Government Legal Affairs Office, C/LPPCC, Social and Legal System Committee, etc.), administrative consultations (administrative bodies, the State Council and governments in each level), intra/inter-party consultations (the CCP and democratic parties), social consultations and deliberations (societal organizations, NGOs), grassroots deliberations (villages and municipal communities¹¹⁷), and intra-enterprise consultations (corporate board, labor union and workers). These institutionalized channels give the public a say in a legitimized way on one hand while higher-up policymaking can also be flexibly made for change.

For the last decade, both official and academic enthusiasms have been concentrated on the more vibrant grassroots consultative and deliberative politics and governance in a freer and autonomous public sphere, as well as their institutionalization. This bottom-up lens of understanding China’s grassroots politics is more conducive to envisioning a potential local democratization. There are various facilitations and incentives for this institutionalization: for instance, the local cadres’ political performances and achievements, superior pressures, policy-making legitimacy, calling for a diversified conflict resolution mechanism, and better collective public opinion and so on. In his long-term fieldwork observations, He (2007) concludes that, “public deliberation together with village elections and rightful resistance movements have developed and deepened local democracy in different ways, it is a path toward democracy, and a new area in which the Chinese can develop and improve local democracy.” These assumptions are confirmed in some institutional designs like the citizen evaluation meetings, residential and village representative assembly, inside of which limited public empowerment and deliberative influence can be found.

¹¹⁷I coined some of the grassroots practices as deliberative designed because on some occasions, for instance, the cases that I followed in Wuxi, Jiangsu Province, the community deliberative polls for discussing some public budgets on the infrastructure sometimes involve a sincere and multi-faceted deliberation with rather equal participants. There exist alike practices in some localities, and they should not be simply underestimated by its deliberative nature. Compared to the regime-level practice, we can say that grassroots cases are presented with higher deliberative quality or deliberativeness in a mixed form with participation, negotiation, consultation, bargaining, deliberation and mediation.

In short, this historical mapping of Chinese *xieshang minzhu* (an umbrella concept including an official sense of consultative democracy and a bottom-up deliberative democracy) facilitates the understanding of how consultation and deliberation are reconciled and embedded in Chinese-style democracy and governance. We can also see how this tradition is rooted in and reconciled with the CCP's revolutions, ideologies and practices, from the early partisan cooperation to the CPPCC's political consultation, from the long-term stagnation of consultative politics to a newly established 'participation of democratic parties in politics under the CCP's leadership' system, and from a more normative political idea to a more practical governance.

The one-party rule does not exclude consultation and deliberation, albeit the mainstream analysis on China's deliberative democracy and institutionalization favors the idea that 'such methods are consolidating Chinese authoritarianism'. Nonetheless, there are more stories to tell: consultation and deliberation and Chinese authoritarianism are themselves multi-complementary and beneficial for the regime and the public. The institutionalization consolidates this connection in a rather legitimized way. My conclusion is that in the short (perhaps long) run, this dichotomy of regime-level consultation and local-level deliberation will continue to paradoxically coexist in China. But worse still, this deliberative future in Xi's era becomes more uncertain. One thing can be sure: the CCP learns some lessons in its history and will not brace a more open and fair deliberation in its strategy.

3 Consultative and Deliberative Democracy in Institutions

Ernest (2005) distinguished the institutionalization in a very two-dimensional way with the (normative) institutional design and (descriptive) intuitional practice. This analytical model provides useful tools to analyze and infer individual and collective preferences and values in some concrete institutions. This institutionalization theory is often used in the economic and organizational realms; nevertheless, it is being increasingly adopted in the political analysis. Compared to the more normative theoretical construction, institutionalization in real political practice can better reflect how a political idea operates and functions through a specific institution, which integrates the rules, procedures, and organizational structures in a whole to regulate the participants' behaviors and actions for the common goal. Bearing this in mind, the institutional design should be understood in a broader sense, as it does not merely refer to the well-established institutions through legal procedures or regulations.

It also includes some institutional designs constrained by tradition, culture, and unspoken rules, for example. Compared with those unreachable formal institutions, those informal ones are more flexible and down-to-earth for practicing of the public everyday political ideas.

Thus, in this section, this two-dimensional analysis for both the specialized consultative body of the CPPCC and some informal institutional designs is revisited to interpret such a transition from the normative idea to the real practice. The design of the CPPCC enables the party-state to keep a constant eye on the most influential social leaders and proactively monitor their ideological orientation, political loyalty and material needs. If we recognize the design of the CPPCC from the very beginning, it is not difficult to understand that the CPPCC is far more a representative organ (it is designed to serve the CCP's one-party rule more than its constituencies) than a consultative body. But when the attention shifts to the more dynamic and vivid informal institutional designs especially in the grassroots, they are more appealing for theorists, practitioners and local cadres. Such a spontaneous institutionalization may facilitate local democratization.

3.1 Specialized Consultative Body of the C/LPPCC

According to Yan (2011), the C/LPPCC and the Chinese regime are closely connected: the former of C/LPPCC provides a platform for the CCP to monitor other democratic parties, social elites and groups. Such interaction is legally institutionalized in various institutional designs including the United Front Work. Especially in Xi's era, those consultative and monitoring institutions and channels are reaffirmed within several party documents and procedures. It is usually considered that a recentralization is taking place in Xi's era. Nevertheless, the C/LPPCC provides an important and institutionalized safeguard for practicing its representation. Their formal meanings constitute a crucial part to Chinese authoritarian resilience.

3.1.1 The C/LPPCC: Status Quo and Its Critiques

The aforementioned mapping on Chinese consultative and deliberative institutionalization somehow depicts a picture of how the C/LPPCC is being established, destroyed and later revitalized and reconstructed. Compared with the seemingly enthusiastic study of deliberative democracy, there are few references available on this topic of the C/LPPCC,

and if any, they may present us with quite polarized research results. For example, the more consolidated stereotype of the CPPCC is the *flower vase* (e.g. Chen, 2011; Yu, 2015; Sagild, 2019) in the mainstream western China studies. They tend to consider the C/LPPCC as tool-like organization ultimately serving the CCP's authoritarianism; but the vast majority of domestic studies have emphasized that political cooperation and consultation through C/LPPCC is unique to China's politics, which can be a manifestation of the superiority of socialism. In Chinese official framing, the C/LPPCC constitutes the main part of China's politics.

According to Mao, the C/LPPCC is an important political consultation and policy advisory body that is responsible for the party's patriotic united front, through political study and ideological transformation, it is possible to canvass those people who are (un)willing to accept the CCP's leadership, for instance, democratic parties, groups and societal elites and even enemies. Since the beginning of this new century, genealogical Chinese leaders have paid great efforts to facilitate these ambitions by issuing various documents, as well as the speeches of top leaders. Up to now, there remains a more open and realistic question on how the C/LPPCC, as a specialized consultative body, can still function properly within the one-party regime with its increasingly limitations¹¹⁸.

The C/LPPCC's consultative function was inherited with Mao's *mass line* (*qunzhong luxian* 群众路线), but now has a rather new look. Mao's legacy is a strong link between cadres and the mass; this new link is manifested with bilateral-interactions of public participation and cadres 'going to the masses (*dao qunzhong zhong qu* 到群众中去)'. This type of the public consultation was coined by 'qunticipation' (*qun* refers to the 'mass', see Wang and Peng, 2011), in which cadres were mobilized to stay close to, hear and gather information from the mass. It seems that both democratic deliberation and Qunticipation can contribute and facilitate good decision-making, but the latter only takes public ideas and preferences as references for decision-making. Despite public participation and sometimes consultation, decision makers (cadres) are taking the main responsibility as regards the final outcomes, and this consultation has little to do with the cultivation of a civil society.

¹¹⁸This analysis is not based on the C/LPPCC's deliberative function, representativeness, nor China's democratic transition. It seems these expectations tend to misunderstand the CPPCC's essence as the mere consultative-designed appendage for the CCP. Nonetheless, the C/LPPCC's window-dressing role is still crucial in China's political structure, given that the C/LPPCC's existence makes the CCP's one-party rule more acceptable and softer. Through this practical design, the CCP can *make friends* with others and consolidates its camp.

Table 4 A Vertical Chronology of the CPPCC's Evolution

Year	Event	Note
01.10.1946	Establishment of the 'Political Consultative Conference' (Old CPPCC)	With the participation of the CCP and the Chinese Kuomintang, the Chinese Youth Party, the Chinese Democratic League and non-party social elites
1948	Calling for the establishment of a democratic coalition government	Commemorate the 'May 1 st ' Labor Day slogan
07.09.1949	Establish the name of the new CPPCC	Several Questions about the People's Political Consultative Conference (Zhou Enlai)
21-30.09.1949	The first plenary session of the CPPCC was held with its formally establishment	662 representatives attended, including representatives of various democratic parties, people's organizations, non-party democrats, the People's Liberation Army, ethnic minorities, overseas Chinese, and representatives of various regions and all walks of life
1954	The CPPCC continued to play an important role as a multi-party cooperation and political consultation organization and united front organization after the first NPC	
1978	The CPPCC was written in the Chinese Constitution	The Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (Deng Xiaoping)
1987	The multi-party cooperation and political consultation system led by the Communist Party of China has been established as China's basic political system	Confirmed China's basic political system in the form of a constitutional amendment (Jiang Zemin)

2002	Reemphasized the theoretical and policy basis and systemic guarantee for the development of the CPPCC in the new era	Opinions on Strengthening the Work of the CPPCC (Hu Jintao)
2012	Continuously improving the functions, roles and status of the CPPCC	After the 18th National Congress (Xi Jinping)

Being a very specialized consultative body, the C/LPPCC's main functions are political consultation, democratic supervision¹¹⁹ and participating in politics. Consensus reached via consultation is referenced to the CCP's decision making rather than making decisions directly. This special political setting can be found in various authoritarian regimes. For instance, the National United Democratic Front in North Korea unites all patriotic forces to support the state's reunification; Vietnam's National Front that carries out the political consultations with the Central Committee of the Vietnam Communist Party and local governments. It can also participate in main legislations and state power construction in certain cases. Laos' National Front also functions as the main national united front organization under the leadership of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party. In addition to the similar national united fronts in these (former)-socialist (Eastern Europe)-states, the consultative settings and organizations can also be found in the Arab states, such as the Consultative Meetings in Egypt (November 1980) and Saudi Arabia (1993), that provide a channel for the state and society to interact.

Similar consultative institutions are also quite common in democracies, for example, the *Le Conseil économique, social et environnemental* (CESE) in France. In response to the month-long 'gilets jaunes' (yellow jacket) protestations, the French President Emmanuel Macron launched the 'grand débat' (grand debate, organized by the CESE¹²⁰), with the claim that all citizens can participate and deliberate about the country's future. Nevertheless, as a matter of fact, this political show is far from deliberative, or even consultative. It rather looks a public distraction on the current governance crisis. In this sense, some consultative settings and designs in democracies are familiar with those in authoritarianisms¹²¹. Public consultation indicates another backward but necessary societal interaction in different political context.

So far, the C/LPPCC's subsidiary role can be interpreted and highlighted in a two-dimensional analysis of its membership and its concrete functions. The C/LPPCC's

¹¹⁹Democratic supervision (*minzhu jiandu* 民主监督) is a bottom-up, non-authoritative supervision, mainly functioning to assist the CCP and some state organs in improving their work and overcoming bureaucracy through suggestions and criticism. This weak supervision is not legally binding and disciplined and is often ignored by cadres.

¹²⁰The CESE is an institution without any decision-making power and attached to the French parliament. The French government entrusted a *puppet* institution (CESE) to organize the great debate instead of choosing the more independent La Commission nationale du débat public (CNDP). Such political show facilitated a way for the better manipulation of the deliberative process. The great debate organized by CESE is extremely limited in this sense.

¹²¹I once participated in the evaluation of the grand débat in Paris organized by CESE in 2019-2020.

members are different from the NPC representatives. As for the former, its members are recommended via various constituencies (*jiebie* 界别)¹²², and approved by the CCP's internal discussion. Nevertheless, in practice, it is often the heads of those constituencies, groups and democratic parties who actually participate in the consultation, rather than the people behind the constituencies, which ultimately leads to the alienation between the C/LPPCC members and their constituencies and render consultative activities a mere elite-game. Nevertheless, some new changes on the C/LPPCC membership in 2020 is that all C/LPPCC members should be recommended by their constituencies, rather than the previously selection and invitation method. To many (e.g. Li, 2020; Pu, 2020), this reform signals political progress of the consultative system for filtering out incompetent CPPCC members, such as *red generation* and *celebrities*.

Albeit consultation is not necessarily linked with politics, in Chinese context, the C/LPPCC is institutionally assumed a firm and inseparable connection with consultative democracy in the official discourse. On the one hand, the C/LPPCC provides practitioners with indigenized institutional sources. When Chinese authors try to reconcile Chinese deliberative democracy with Western narratives, the C/LPPCC design is quite often used to fill this void by claiming its deliberative structures. On the other hand, most practices especially in the grassroots pre-existed the construction of the concepts of consultative or deliberative democracy; but the C/LPPCC promotes this idea by incorporating with and embedding them in Chinese political settings, therefore, reducing the resistance to the implementation of such democratic discourses in China.

In addition, the most authoritative documents related to the C/LPPCC can only be found in the '*CPPCC Constitution*' (1982) and its amendments in 1994, 2000, 2004 and 2018. The Chinese Constitution only stipulates some vague and macro-principle provisions of the C/LPPCC without any empowerment. Concrete and practical rules are not bound by laws. Ironically, the government must obey the N/LPC's instructions while merely *respecting* the C/LPPCC's suggestions. In this dilemma, many authors are calling for a legal transition of C/LPPCC norms, but authorities worry that such empowerments will ultimately erode the N/LPC's dominant status. This worry turned to be unnecessary as the CPPCC exercised

¹²²The C/LPPCC members are nonelected but recommended by their constituencies. These constituencies, such as the educational, industrial and commercial domains, first recommend candidates then they will be approved by the CCP's United Front Work. However, this process requires the CCP's close-door intra-discussions for deciding the right candidates. Commonly, candidates are chosen among those constituency's elite.

the state power before the NPC's founding; nonetheless, this arrangement did not change the power structure in China, and later achieved a peaceful transition.

Given the evidence, I argue that, even for the long run, the C/LPPCC will still play an *irreplaceable role*¹²³ in China's political setting. This function, as mentioned above, is not based on the deliberative purpose (public empowerment), nor China's democratic transition, it is *functional* and *symbolic*. That said, the C/LPPCC has provided the Chinese party-state with a highly controllable *yet* effective channel for political participation and consultation, the regime does benefit from this limited participation for the legitimacy-acquisition. Nevertheless, such an increasingly closed elite circle and its intra-consultations are posing a threat to its mere symbolic function. Therefore, political reforms and certain empowerment of C/LPPCC is necessary.

3.1.2 The CPPCC's Uncertainties Future

The CCP has repeatedly reemphasized the C/LPPCC's *originality* in China's politics and proclaimed its long-standing status in Chinese political design. Despite many critiques, Cabestan (2015), a French Chinese observer at Hong Kong Baptist University, discussed three additional useful functions of the C/LPPCC in the current Chinese political context, "the main added value of the CPPCC, in particular at the national level, has been the political stage it offers to the non-bureaucratic elites of the state. It allows them to air their views in a more candid manner than governmental officials, and perhaps also the NPC delegates". Albeit the aforementioned quantitative analysis of the CPPCC proposals in recent years indicated a qualitative decline with some depoliticizing tendencies, mainstream proposals can still reflect certain social problems and those voices can be collected and referenced by the CCP for policy making.

A reexamination of the C/LPPCC will lead to the fair conclusion that despite a calling for reforms, its political function is still limited, which makes the weakest and most marginalized part in the 'four leading teams' of Chinese governance (the other three are the party, government and N/LPC). It is partly due to the fact that the C/LPPCC membership does not constitute a full-time job, therefore making it a distraction rather

¹²³Former president Hu Jintao stated that, "the C/LPPCC plays an 'irreplaceable' role in China's politics" at the conference celebrating the 60th anniversary of the establishment of the CPPCC. See People's Daily September 21, 2009.

than a full responsibility. Moreover, the CPPCC membership also bring its members with a *star aura* and isolates them from their constituencies. A classic metaphorical interpretation is that the C/LPPCC is a guard line, the CCP at the top of the pyramid while with the elite and the ordinary public underneath. This in-between status allows the C/LPPCC to channel bottom-up voices to the top, and sometimes such a platform can facilitate some very superficial consultation institutionally. More attention should be paid to how the C/LPPCC can fulfill its *functional* and *symbolic* role under the CCP's authoritarian monopoly of power rather than its representativeness and deliberativeness.

Cabestan (2015) stated that, “the CPPCC's elitist membership and lack of democratic legitimacy do not really contribute to a more harmonious CCP state-society relation”. It is true that the C/LPPCC has a very weak influence on the CCP's policy making, and one cannot expect more of such a consultative body will exert many influences to the CCP's ruling. But interestingly, there are more and more business actors and entrepreneurs, for example, have actively sought a political status by accessing a C/LPPCC membership in the last decades. Their main concern is to ensure that their business is not being threatened. It brings different voices to the top on the one hand, but it also brings some manipulation of information on the other. Thus, the elite-like C/LPPCC consultation is conditionally beneficial to the regime, not the public. These defects are not easy to remedy because of the disempowerment political reforms. To summarize, the C/LPPCC is important in its *functionalist* and *symbolic* sense. For this sake, the CCP has to design the C/LPPCC's vassal role in the foreseeable political reforms more tactically, and these efforts will better embed the C/LPPCC in China's political framework, democratic discourse and political propaganda.

3.2 Informal Consultative and Deliberative Institutions as Practice

The establishment of various forms of informal participatory devices and consultative and sometimes deliberative institutions provide the public with more flexible and cheaper participatory channels and opportunities, which can make up for the closedness brought by the elite consultations. Those informal settings and designs can be considered as the exploration of deliberative politics in everyday practices, especially in the grassroots. They

may not meet the standards of authentic deliberation or of strict institutional designs, sometimes hybrid with traditions, customs and unique behavioral logics. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that this vast array of practices has indeed enriched a more vibrant institutionalization of consultation and deliberation.

To make it clear, I made two efforts in this part. Firstly, unlike some domestic authors who risk loosely defining deliberation by labelling every practice deliberation, I adopt a more pragmatic approach to distinguish the consultative, deliberative and participatory nature of these practices. Indeed, this approach allows to avoid some misunderstandings and misuses of deliberation per se on one hand; they also fill the gap between Chinese and Western comparative political studies by a very respective analysis. For instance, the aforementioned C/LPPCC and the United Front Work, as well as some (semi)-official background or sponsored practices are consultative-oriented; some other practices, like participatory budgeting, are obviously neither consultative nor deliberative with merely symbolic public participation. For example, cases in some urban communities in southeast China have been piloted in participatory budgeting in infrastructure, but these hearings engaged many citizens without vigilance in discussion, and such designs fail in both the consultative (preset and limited budget) and deliberative (large-scale) effects.

In some certain cases (as indicated in my field observations in Chinese rural autonomous villages and communities in chapter five), there is some authentic and sincere deliberation within, this deliberation is based on the equal and fair communication and dialogue among participants. These practices can be assessed with a Discourse Quality Index (DQI, see Steenbergen, Bächtiger, Spörndli and Steiner, 2003, they may not get a 100% score but are very close). Although sometimes applying such criteria to appraise Chinese practices seems crucial. It indeed provides a coordinating way to justify the participation (an input stage), justification of reasons (deliberative stage) and transformation of the public preferences (decision-making stage). For this purpose, I will respectively revisit these participatory, consultative and deliberative institutions and their *pros and cons*, as well as their embeddedness in Chinese politics.

3.2.1 A Historical Justification on the Consultative Resources

Mainstream Chinese authors draw many inspirations from Chinese history to justify Chinese ‘deliberative democracy’. But this path is problematic, at least in its conceptual

framing, and these sources are leading to a very loose definition of ‘deliberation’. The consultation between the emperor and ministers of ancient dynasties and the hierarchical dialogue advocated by Confucianism are evidentially consultative. For example, during the Shang and Zhou dynasties, decrees required emperors to consult with the ministers on specific issues hierarchically in political organization and consultative mechanism (He, 2014). The emperor was the final decision maker. The settings were authoritarian, but these top-down interactions provided some initiative rudiments of the monarch-ministerial consultations. Its main differences with public consultation (Fishkin, Luskin and Jowell, 2000; Fishkin, 2011) in a modern sense is that the latter is more institutionalized and standardized. Chinese feudalism was based on the small-scale-peasant economy where a powerful state could not cultivate a Western individualistic civil society. That said, this top-down and collectivist consultation inhibits the individualistic fair deliberation. For example, participatory experiments in important village (collective) decision-making usually take the family as the unit (usually represented by the male head of the household). This top-down governance is still quite common in Chinese regions, and such a model is hard to facilitate equal deliberation and consultation.

Besides the numerous remonstrations¹²⁴ submitted to emperors by the ministers, elite consultation also made its way in the quite limited public sphere. For instance, *shuyuan* or *xuanyuan* (school/academia) provided venues for the intellectuals and elites to discuss the state affairs and public policies publicly (Chen and He, eds. 2006), those intellectuals, as well as their remonstrations can have a certain influence and restraint on the emperors’ decision-making. They played the role of intermediaries between the public and officials. Their liberal status facilitated the freer expression and representation of public voice, and channeled a way for top-down communication. Some intra-academic consultations and deliberations could have a potential influence on the central decision-making. Zi Chan, a prestigious politician in late Spring and Autumn Period thus emphasized, “without internal academic consultation and deliberation, it would be like damming up a river, hear peoples’

¹²⁴As mentioned before, albeit emperors claimed to be ‘sons of heaven (*tianzi* 天子)’, they were indeed constrained with some common rules, public morale and opinions for fulfilling the Heaven’s will. This tradition spawns the consultation between the emperor and minister, albeit most of these consultations under the *rule of man* depended on the emperor’s personal preferences. There were exceptions: for example, some excellent emperors (e.g. Taizong in Tang dynasty) in ancient dynasties were willing to listen to and open to public opinion. Some autocrats, were on the contrary fanatical about totalitarianism and ignoring ministers’ remonstrations that ultimately lead to coups d’état. This indicates that despite the uncertainties of consultation in feudal context, it does facilitate the regime stability and good governance.

complaints just as there is a need to have a little break in the dikes to prevent the build-up and sudden surge of water”.

Another external influence of the academic consultation refers to the expostulation to the higher-ups and a certain public representation. Expostulation can provide the emperor with suggestions and references, which can be probably engaged in the decision-making process. Simultaneously, the participation of the local elite (*xiangxian* 乡贤, non-officials with a prestigious social status play an important role in modern grassroots governance) brought the public voice upwards and indirectly influenced central decisions. As for the more typical example of *Donglin Academy* (*donglin shuyuan* 东林书院), it is a regional political force represented by intellectuals in the late Ming Dynasty. Its members gave political lectures to the public and conveyed public complaints to the imperial court. Such academy actively and spontaneously channeled a bottom-up consultation for the public livelihood. Nevertheless, this non-official group later on evolved into a partisan-like organization with great political influence and claimed to be representative of the people. Such an identity conversion ultimately led to top-down suppression and ended in failure.

Before and after the feudalism in China, such consultative settings and designs were quite common; they may have had different in names but shared similarities. Consultation was very uneven in scope and quality and far from public deliberation in democratic sense. They were mainly elitist in a top-down fashion. Nonetheless, the aforementioned academic consultation among the public still struggled its way to channel their voice upward. In the heyday of public consultation, those intellectuals could represent public opinion without threatening the central power. Whether it is very top-down consultation initiated by the emperors, or the elitist bottom-up consultation in the public sphere that can indirectly influence the central decision making, they tend to cultivate a ‘good governance’ sense of consultation that served centralization. These interactions between and among officials, social elites and public were motivated by several reasons: the emperor fulfilling God’s will, better policy making, social order maintenance, dealing with (potential) public uprisings, and so on. All these features inspired and reshaped modern Chinese consultation, and interestingly, these legacies sometimes gave the authorities excuses for allowing non-empowering and top-down consultation, and claiming that such approaches could be reconciled and embedded in China’s politics.

3.2.2 Some Participatory and Deliberative-Like Experimentations

Grassroots deliberative experiments have flourished in the last two decades, especially in the more developed coastal regions (Jiangsu and Zhejiang province, for example) with a seemingly institutionalized and systemic turn. These practices are more flexible and adaptable in a rather freer local political sphere, and this turn inspired many authors and practitioners more confidence to seek for an indigenized approach to Chinese deliberative democracy by focusing on a large stock of empirical cases. I will not summarize a universal type or rule for these practices given the uneven landscape of deliberative practice among Chinese regions. My effort in this part is to disentangle the diversity of such practices by selecting various typical participatory and deliberative cases. They may not be highly institutionalized and standardized, but are widely recognized and adopted in the local practices.

The most typical experiment is deliberative polling, whose design, in the Chinese context, takes considerations of authoritarianism, deliberativeness and representativeness altogether. Fishkin (1998, 2000, 2003, 2010, 2018) took a leading role in the deliberative polling design. Such deliberative design has been experimented in several countries, including China, India, Brazil, the United Kingdom, etc. In the Chinese case, deliberative polling was designed to mobilize public participation in policy making in a fairer way. As Fishkin (2018) describes it:

Recruitment via random sampling gives each member of the population an equal chance of participating, moderators ensure opportunities for equal participation in small group discussions. At the same time, the small group discussion and plenary question-and-answer sessions give participants the opportunities for considering competing points of view, to become more informed about trade-offs affecting their choices, and then to express their considered opinions in confidential questionnaires.

(Fishkin, 2018 p.23)

The very case in Zeguo, Zhejiang province indicated the feasibility of such deliberative design¹²⁵. It includes a complex set of procedural designs, a combination of statistical and legal representatives, and random selection with careful applicable conditions. Compared

¹²⁵For more detailed studies on deliberative polling and Chinese cases, see Fishkin, He and Siu, (2006), Fishkin, He, Luskin and Siu, (2010), Fishkin (2012), Su, Le, Zhang and Ma, (2012).

with the enthusiasm in the last decade, this design has gradually encountered its bottleneck, especially under the premise that local power is increasingly restricted. Fishkin positively thinks that the authoritarianism may somehow facilitate the implementation of deliberative polling and policies in China; nevertheless, this design can only be adopted conditionally, and depends on the personal preference of local cadres¹²⁶. It is hard for such a costly design to exert a long-lasting influence in Chinese local practices, and a closer examination also indicates that deliberative polling can guarantee the equal participation. Nonetheless, this mini-public deliberation is doomed to fail in a malformed Chinese civil society.

Another common deliberative form is honest talk (*keentan* 恳谈), this design is an umbrella name that engages many homogeneous deliberative practices which are widely adopted at the Chinese grassroots (village, urban community) to resolve daily conflicts and facilitate democratic (on-the-spot) decision making. Rather than using some obscure political terms like deliberative democracy, honest talk is more acceptable and understandable for the ordinary public with the sincere idea of exchange and multiple communication. This down-to-earth approach can also lend credentials to local cadres with authentic talk and access to the higher-ups, in some cases, on-the-spot decisions can be made after simple voting¹²⁷. There are various incentives for facilitating those honest talks in local politics. Firstly, the public participating in deliberation has become an integral part in the democratic legal decision-making process. This approach can help handle some very sensitive topics like democracy and rebalance the relation between deliberation and voting; also, this pragmatic method can solve practical problems and it is more adopted by local cadres as a means of political innovation to improve political performance. The honest talk is one type of small-scale deliberative design, in Chinese context, it means the ‘heart-to-heart’ talk, at best, it achieves authentic deliberation in mini-public, while distorts in the mass participation.

The third type of democratic hearing is considered a more controversial and much criticized pseudo-deliberative form in China. Besides the legal procedure in legislative- and administrative-consultation, some other informal and apolitical hearings are also frequently held to expand public engagement and collect public preferences. Notably, a hearing per se is not a democratic process because of its patronizing and top-down fashion. The final

¹²⁶A return visit to the pilot of deliberative polling indicated that many experiments have stalled, and the newly appointed leaders are not interested in this design.

¹²⁷My case studies in Shandong province indicated that the on-the-spot decision making after honest talk usually involved only insignificant issues between and among villagers or residents in everyday life. In most cases, decisions need to be made by local cadres in close-door meetings or be approved by the higher town(ship) governments.

decision-making usually cannot accurately reflect the public needs. Xie (2013) in his book *Governmental Reform and Innovation* stated that the village/town(ship) democratic hearing and the institutionalization of villagers' council are two key decision-making advisory entities in local deliberative governance. This idea is unpersuasive in terms of both procedural engagement and close-door policymaking. The very case of 'listening more, rising prices more'¹²⁸ indicated that the superficial hearing is meretricious on its form: it seldom has a substantive influence and rare interactions can be found during the process. Officials tend to make decisions regardless of the public's needs with a pre-built version. In such cases, they are neither consultative nor deliberative but only participatory, lacking mutual respect and justification in the very rubber stamp decision making, especially in higher-hierarchy hearings.

Another similar type is participatory budgeting. According to Sintomer (2008, 2012), there are five criteria of discussion of financial/budgetary process, city level involvement, repeated process over years, public deliberation included, and accountabilities of the results adopted for the reappraisal of the equal and fair participatory process in budget. If these criteria are the minimal requisites for participatory budgeting, very few cases are qualified in the Chinese context. Firstly, the large stock practices are focused on financial/budgetary issue and few of them can last for more than one year with a very limited scope (rare cases will involve large-scale (city- even provincial-level) budget participation, most cases are focused on villages or urban communities, or some town(ships)). The available and accessible budgets are usually preset by authorities (at least the majority of the budgets), and this government-led model is really different from the practice in Porto Alegre in Brazil, for instance, which involves more NGOs and citizens. China's practice favors more government monopoly and expert advice. As for public deliberation, it may exist in the more small-scale community 'participatory budgeting' (like citizens making autonomous decision after deliberation, e.g. my case in the communities in Wuxi, Jiangsu). Hence, such practices are predominantly participatory, sometimes with the consultation of citizens' preferences.

¹²⁸Many similar cases have proved the hypocrisies of the public hearing. In 2009, a public hearing on the price of water adjustment was held after the L government decided raising the household water price by 0.9 yuan per cubic meter. The three-hour hearing formed a 40,000-word work plan, and albeit majorities did not agree with the price increase, the final result was that nothing changed as expected. Available at <http://opinion.people.com.cn/GB/10596874.html>. [Accessed 25 Sep. 2019]. Also, decisions after the hearings are usually arbitrary with simple majority voting without taking into account the interests of the minority.

The last case is the citizen evaluation meeting. Citizens are empowered to evaluate local cadres with their political performance and promotion through various meetings, for example, a mayor's complaint hotline. It is designed for better monitoring and supervising the local cadres' administration. This bottom-up restriction effectively prevents cadre corruption and inaction. Nevertheless, hypercorrection of the public supervision renders some local cadres unwilling and afraid to take responsibility and intensifies the antagonism between the government and the public. According to the interviews conducted with some grassroots cadres, responding to both the superior inspections and public evaluations accounts for 70% to 80% of their workload¹²⁹. This bottom-up limit forces the local cadres to talk to and deliberate with the public, but this also makes the grassroots cadres limited in their daily administration and lacking the courage to innovate. In a nutshell, those local innovations are sometimes unstructured and nonstandard practices, but they enrich the deliberative system by shifting the academic focus from the formal practice (e.g. parliament, legislation) to the more informal venues. Some whims may not be long lasted, and some prototypes, for example, honest talks in southeastern coastal area are also difficult to promote nationally due to the geographical disparities. But those attempts vividly depict a more vibrant local participatory and deliberative picture. Despite possible critiques, to conclude, they are undoubtedly given high hopes for the renewed awareness of deliberative democracy and potential bottom-up democratization in China.

4 Institutionalization of Authoritarianism: A Deliberative Approach

Contemporary deliberative democracy studies called for an institutional and systemic turn. Nevertheless, some more crucial questions are proposed like whether deliberation can be institutionalized, or, what the feasibilities of deliberation in real political life are (e.g. in some institutions), to what extent can institutionalized deliberation interpret the ideal and normative deliberative doctrines (Hands, 2000; Ryfe, 2005; Crowley, 2009). There are also some more radical questions like whether institutionalized deliberation is always a good thing. Those challenges should be highlighted before reexamining the various deliberative institutions and designs in the current literature rather than focusing on the institution per

¹²⁹Interviews with the cadres in L County propaganda department on 12.2019.

se. This part of the analysis focused on the institutionalization of deliberation within a nondemocratic context, rather than looking into the mainstream enthusiasms on how deliberation facilitate China's democratic transition. Conversely, my approach is to disentangle how this institutionalized deliberation can be adopted for strengthening and consolidating Chinese authoritarianism, in other words, how this institutionalized Chinese authoritarian rule can reconcile the public participation, consultation and sometimes deliberation.

It is very true that any normative idea should be practiced through concrete institutions, institutionalization seems to be an inevitable topic in the political process, but such a process should be understood in a broad sense, it does not only refer to legitimized and institutionalized forms, parliaments, legislatures, for example, those which legally establish procedural deliberation. There are also deliberative institutions designed informally (e.g. bound by customs, traditions and protocols), and such (preexisting) informal settings are even more influential in reshaping public's political thinking. For example, the Confucian legacy is still exerting a subtle influence on Chinese grassroots politics. To grasp the link between institutionalization and democracy, it is important to notice that in authoritarian context, efforts to institutionalize consultation and deliberation do give people a say, nevertheless, their voice remains limited and controllable, which ultimately facilitates a softer authoritarianism.

4.1 China's Authoritarian Institutionalization

In the famous formulation of Chinese 'authoritarian resilience', Nathan (2017) assumed a firm link between institutionalization and authoritarian regime resilience and inclusion, which includes formal and informal rules against the regime hasty democratic transition or losing its control over the whole society. China's political reforms after 1989 also seem to continue this tradition with several basic political settings settled. For instance, bureaucratic downsizing, party institutionalization, major central-provincial tax reforms, bureaucratic centralization, semi-competitive elections in some self-managing villages, enhanced legal institutions and the rise of the regulatory state, etc. (Gilley, 2008). Nevertheless, these political reforms are all carried out under the CCP's monopoly and penetration *vis-à-vis* some internal and external pressure for change. In order to consolidate

these political principles, an institutional thinking has been put on the agenda, and this demand has been even more urgent than in democracies.

Why authoritarian institutionalization? Authoritarian regimes are challenged and potentially threatened by constant competitors and rivals. Tactically co-opting those challenges without eroding the authoritarian rule, or, encapsulating potential oppositions (O'Donnell, 1973; also see Linz, 1973) is the imperative task. According to Gandhi and Przeworski (2007), for the authoritarian leaders, such dilemmas can be handled through cooperation with both allies and rivals within some quasi-democratic institutions. This corporatism¹³⁰ and limited participation and consultation are rolling as a more flexible approach to maintain the regime continuation without using force, which is considered costly and uncivilized. The CCP's United Front Work strategy, the 'unify all forces that can be united, isolate and fight the rivals' Maoist doctrine, the reemphasized construction of the 'mass line' and CPPCC in Xi's era, give us an insight into how the CCP tries to unite all available sources via some well-designed institutions to consolidate its authoritarian rule.

To legitimize and consolidate this cooperation entails different institutional designs. Besides those institutionalized, legitimized and structured forms, authoritarian rulers also have a strong will to penetrate and control the whole society (Gershenson and Grossman, 2001) in some very informal ways. In exchange, the regime offers individuals willing to collaborate with the regime a vehicle for advancing their careers within a stable system of patronage (Gandhi and Przeworski, 2007). For this purpose, the institutionalization can be understood as a reciprocal process for both the regime and the society, and it is mostly utilitarian to deal with some practical problems. In practice, authoritarian institutions can facilitate regime legitimacy by checking and balancing the qualified forces filtering into the institutions. Friedrich and Brzezinski (1961) underestimated these institutionalized and structured settings in authoritarian states by describing them as mere "window-dressing".

¹³⁰Most authoritarian regimes remained one-party design, which does not amount to a 'full control' over the whole society through this single party, as cooperative alliance is always necessary. According to Unger and Chan (1995), such cooperation already functioned in Mao's era, namely, a proto-corporatist type (totalitarian, this cooperation is based on the party's command system with very rigid operations), it later shifted to an authoritarian-corporatist model, in which the party's monopoly was partly achieved via surrogates. Nevertheless, Unger's discussions limit this kind of cooperation within some societal associations and organizations. The CCP, in this sense, maintained a macro control. Expanding the understanding of contemporary Chinese politics makes it necessary to explain the CCP's cooperation with democratic (non)-partisan elites through various consultative bodies like C/LPPCC and United Front Work. This cooperation is both formal and essential, given that such an approach ensures the CCP can handle potential uncertainties in a more stable, legitimized and institutionalized way.

Many students in this realm also hold this claim. This approach is of importance for Chinese authoritarianism, as the CCP accurately perceives the uncertainties and responds with a sufficient degree of institutionalization. This allows more flexible policy adjustment in institutions to respond to potential threats, which is more recognized and acceptable.

For instance, the C/LPPCC is quite often regarded as a flower vase (Chen, 2011; Sagild and Ahlers, 2019) with its merely consultative function in China's political settings, while my conclusion indicates that the C/LPPCC's 'formal significance' is even greater than its consultative function. Information provided by the C/LPPCC cover a wide range, and these professional (the C/LPPCC members are usually constituency elites) and diverse proposals provide the CCP with a megaphone to monitor various societal voices in this institutional channel. That said, the CCP treats the C/LPPCC merely as a symbolic and facade political institution that fulfills the role designed by the CCP in accommodating some newly emerging classes, coopting potential political oppositions, and stretching the resilience of the party-state system (Yu, 2015). If the democracy proclaimed by the CCP is 'people-oriented', this democracy is achieved via the regime empowering its people, rather than the empowered public make decision themselves. Against this background, democracy or governance are all endorsed a way of providing public good via a top-down fashion. This good governance can be achieved based on the comprehensive information collection and analysis through established institutions like the C/LPPCC and some aforementioned informal ones.

In short, rather than being pessimistic about how superficial and dysfunctional authoritarian institutions are, a more radical lens may be to observe how those institutions facilitate the regime survival (Gandhi, and Przeworski, 2007; Wright, and Escribà-Folch, 2012; Wallace, 2013; Pepinsky, 2014) and, conversely, pushing authoritarian rulers to provide better governance. This thinking may contribute to a small, but growing literature on how authoritarian institutions facilitate Chinese authoritarian resilience. This is not a simple dichotomous debate between democracy and authoritarianism, or, whether the institutionalization of authoritarianism can promote a democratic transition. More likely, it is a pragmatic view looking into the changes that have occurred in real-world politics.

To understand Chinese authoritarian institutionalization, I thus discard the democratic transition studies advocated by Huntington (1993) and later followers. The 'third wave democratization' may partially explain the democratic transition in some authoritarian

regimes. Ironically, the world political changes in last decades undermined such analysis by refreshing the repeatability between democracy and authoritarianism. Also, transition studies regard liberal democracy as the very *end* of the human political civilization. This conclusion definitely ignores and marginalizes the other emerging political practices. China is always used as a typical case to testify the failure of this transition theory. This is not a simple defense of the authoritarianism, presumably, as the Chinese political discourse may potentially evolve with a set of convincing paradigms that parallel to the Western discourse. While in this *lucky bag*, institutionalization is both ideologically and empirically helpful to legitimize and standardize authoritarianism, certainly, such a way cannot substantially erode the authoritarian monopoly behind the formal institutions. It nevertheless maintains a rather long-lasting social order and facilitates authoritarian resilience.

4.2 Facilitation of Chinese Authoritarianism via Deliberative Institutions

The discussions on institutionalization seem to be implicitly associated with democracy that serve as a means of modern governance, also symbolic in modernization. This may be true. Nevertheless, in authoritarian designs, this relationship is reversed; that is, institutionalization or various institutional designs are strengthening authoritarianism and facilitating the regime monopoly within the legitimized reach¹³¹. In the classification of different types of authoritarian regimes, citizens are more or less involved in the (in)formal institutionalized participatory devices. Some consultative and deliberative settings with a compromised approach for dealing with the pressures of democratization have failed. Nevertheless, China's case has proved to be rather adaptive and sustainable. Rather than empowering citizens through participation and deliberation, this strategy achieves a benign interaction between the regime and the public by seeking an *equilibrium* between citizen engagement and later control. Even if such strict control sometimes brings resistance, good governance will partially offset these threats. It can be found that most resistance at the

¹³¹A lot of participatory, consultative and deliberative institutions in the West also favor regime stability, and it is hard to say these institutional designs are really democratic. The differences are, even if such institutions are designed symbolic, competitive elections can remedy their lesser influence in democracies, at best, partly. In authoritarian countries like China, for example, if public dissatisfaction cannot be subsided through formal institutions, protests and petitions usually break out but these actions are risking being suppressed. Another difference, both authoritarianism and democracy all benefit from the persuasive influence of consultation and deliberation, while for the former, decision-making involves not just concentrated control over decisions that may have been widely deliberated, but also control over the agenda.

grassroots level can be well solved through compromise decision-making after deliberation among all parties.

In other chapters of this thesis, the formal and informal participatory, consultative and deliberative institutions in contemporary China have been reexamined. They are fulfilling their role in the CCP's designs, and carefully monopolize the inputs, procedures and outcomes. Nonetheless, such designs do give the public a say and sometimes make them feel they can influence the decision-making. Also, those interactions between regime and society render the former more responsive, especially at the local level, countermeasures like regular elections, supervision, performance evaluation that prompt local cadres to be more responsible. This rather bottom-up binding expands its boundaries to some non-elected cadres at the municipal and even provincial levels. According to Nathan (2018), these limited and controllable input institutions can be very flexible. For example, the administrative litigation allows citizens to sue government agencies; the letters-and-visits (*xinfang xizhidu* 信访制度) give the public a chance to complain directly to the higher-ups, albeit sometimes such channels are blocked by the intervention of local cadres. Also, the flourishing mass media play a supervisory role in the cadres' administration. These channels exist in the mutual acquiescence of the regime and public, and some even have no legal basis (e.g. petition), and basic interactions and communication are not deliberative. Nevertheless, a stable and pragmatic society benefits much from these methods.

Those efforts can be found in both democracies and authoritarian regimes, but with different purposes. In the former, most theories of deliberative democracy presuppose a firm and symbiotic relationship between the democratic institutions and deliberation (Cohen, 1996; Gutmann and Thompson, 1996; Bohman, 1998; Elster, 1998; Chambers, 2003): for example, the very institutionalized French 'débat public' in the policy-making processes in large infrastructures in CNDP (Blatrix *et al.*, 2007), participatory budgeting in Brazil within which introduced the deliberative toolbox in governmental budget processes (Sintomer, 2012; Abers, 2000; Avritzer, 2012). But when He and Warren (2011) defend the idea of 'deliberative authoritarianism', they mention that such links are not necessary and may problematic in China. My focus on 'authoritarian deliberative institutionalization' can also benefit from these clues. As aforementioned, I assumed a respective correspondence amongst the regime and local-level institutions with participation, consultation and deliberation. Although this link is not absolute, it can be a reliable general description. For some formal regime-level institutional participation ('orderly participation')

in Chinese official terminology, see also Ogden, 2002; He, 2007), this type enables controlled consultation (for He, this can be deliberative designed)¹³² among the CCP, the CPPCC members, democratic parties and some other stockholders. Such participation and consultation are under the CCP's leadership.

Beside those formal thinking, the adaptive informal institutionalization of deliberation (Tsai, 2006) also accounts for a large stock of informal interactions between and among local states, economic actors and society via informal institutions which ultimately provide both the impetus and legitimizing basis for political reform in local China and bridge the gaps between official regulations and everyday practices. Informal institutions are designed for the dysfunction and unintended institutional outcomes of the formal settings, while the latter expects the predictability and stability of human interactions. For instance, lay citizens seldom have the chance to participate in elite discussions in the C/LPPCC, but informal deliberative institutions provide more transformative possibilities, for example the spontaneously formed deliberative meetings in rural villages that are defaulted by grassroots authorities and enjoy a certain degree of autonomy. But those groups or organizations risk losing control, when, because of some potential abilities of mobilization, they will be transformed into (semi)-official institutions by the local government for monitoring.

However, this delicate balance has been maintained controllably, and the Chinese authoritarian regime is willing to embrace these non-elective-based and sometimes deliberative political designs more. This gives a venue for practicing deliberation in such a context. In autonomous rural villages, deliberative meetings are held to elicit people's support for local projects; and pressure from the dissatisfaction on village elections also forces elites to consult with the people. Sometimes, these consultations can have deliberative elements (O'Brien and Li, 2006) and influence. Once again, the analysis of the institutionalization of participation, consultation and deliberation in authoritarianism is not based on the China's (seeking) democratic transitions. As Nathan argues, the Chinese regime and its resilience come from the adaptability, complexity, autonomy, and coherence of state organization. That said, 'pseudo' or 'illiberal' democracy, nor the 'competitive' or 'electoral' authoritarianism do not describe its distinctive one-party rule (He and Warren,

¹³²I argue that such designs and settings are far from deliberative (even if they use '*xieshang* 协商 (translated in English as deliberation) in its names), they are mostly participatory consultations. That said, it can be pre-decision-making with mere symbolic participation required by laws and regulations, or participatory consultation for the collection of preferences and opinions.

2011) properly. This claim is of importance to argue that such institutional designs are flexible in both consolidating regime legitimacy and limiting the effectiveness of command authoritarianism.

Authoritarian regimes need participation, consultation and deliberation, and are even more willing to institutionalize them. Despite authoritarian ruling, legitimacy and governance capabilities are not necessarily related to deliberative methods. Nevertheless, when the short-term means to maintain legitimacy are exhausted, for instance, the CCP's legitimacy source in the past two decades came from the rapid economic growth, such approaches are on its agenda. To tame and control the participation and deliberation in a legitimized reach, institutionalization can fill this void well. Various designs are more functionalist for solving practical problem, while the carefully consultations and deliberations in turn provide impetus for good policy and governance.

5 Conclusion

In the last two decades, pragmatic theorists have been increasingly interested in the feasibility and practicalities of deliberation and deliberative democracy. This focus later prompted a calling for 'down to earth' deliberative democracy study with many deliberative designs scattered in different hierarchies, realms, political contexts and cultural backgrounds. For example, besides classical deliberative venues like parliaments, some delicate mini-public settings like the deliberative polling and citizen assembly have also flourished. These highly institutionalized designs guarantee the public can access and participate in deliberation. If we adopted, as aforementioned, a broader definition of institutionalization, perhaps, some informal designs and settings bound by custom, convention and culture, for example, the honest talk, should also be taken into consideration in this analysis. The broadly defined 'institutionalization of deliberative democracy', as many deliberative democrats assume, not only provides toolkit for practicing deliberation in real life; it is also captured as the main *promoter* of a systemic turn of deliberative democracy.

A mapping of the institutionalization of Chinese deliberative democracy (1921-present) indicates how those unstructured and disorganized (quasi)deliberative-like practices have gradually institutionalized in a modern sense. This historical and cultural combing is also

theoretically helpful to provide some indigenized sources and explain the uniqueness of Chinese deliberative democracy. These traceable evolutions mainly exist in the CCP's exploring, from the early partisan cooperation to the institutionalization of the C/LPPCC's consultation after the founding of new China in 1949. A renaissance and rejuvenation of consultative politics after the reform and opening up in 1978 based on the institutionalized C/LPPCC constitutes the cornerstone of China's political design. Such a consideration learns some lessons from the political tragedies in the 1960s and 1970s where consultation and deliberation stagnated due to political movements. Until now, the repositioning of the C/LPPCC as well as some other political consultative and deliberative institutions like the United Front Work jointly functioned within China's current political settings. Simultaneously, the more vibrant local practices contribute to another understanding of Chinese deliberative democracy. These informal practices and designs are mixed with various communicative and interactive forms like participation, consultation and deliberation, and they potentially facilitate public empowerment and the cultivation of civil society.

Nevertheless, as I conclude, this institutionalization of Chinese deliberative democracy does not endorse an embrace of deliberative democracy (both a deliberative concept of democracy and public empowerment like voting and suffrage). It is an institutionalization of authoritarianism through the consultative and deliberative approach. For example, the C/LPPCC and some other well-designed regime-level consultative institutions are consistently criticized as 'window-dressing' or 'rubber-stamp'. We are well aware that such institutions are fulfilling their role in the CCP's designs as mere consultative and advisory bodies. Its facade meaning is however greater than its substantive function. Optimists more likely pin their hopes on the local (grassroots) practices and experimentations. They themselves justified authentic deliberation can be found in the lower level especially the autonomous village and there may have subsequent democratic implication and influence. This may be true, nevertheless, its future is gloomy. This is not only due to the fact that these massive deliberative institutions are inextricably connected with the government, they are mostly (semi)official or fundraised. Especially in Xi's era, a reemphasis on the grassroots party building indicates a more authoritarian control over the local autonomy.

Chapter Five: Consultative/Deliberative Governance (*Xieshang Zhili* 协商治理) in Practice: Two Case Studies

1 Introduction

A normative and theoretical revisiting on deliberative democracy in the West paves the way for reexamining some its core dimensions and thereafter, providing possibilities of the construction of the fresh non-Western and indigenized concept of ‘deliberative democracy’ in Chinese authoritarianism. This transition from normative scrutiny to empirical analysis on consultative/deliberative governance inspired a group of enthusiastic practitioners and supporters working on the seemingly more dynamic deliberative practice. In China, the strong state is usually the pioneer to facilitate this consultative/deliberative governance with a (in)direct manipulation of the consultative/deliberative process, venue, topic and outcome, though. It is nevertheless not the whole picture. For example, grassroots cadres in some east-coastal villages and urban communities are willing to embrace a consultative /deliberative approach to solve practical problems.

There are various incentives for this motivation. Unsatisfied with the waning economic-driven performance, officials at all levels regard political innovation as another alternative to improve their performance. This is a reciprocal process, as the government can share disadvantageous responsibilities and decision-making by consulting and deliberating with the public while the public is being valued and can have something to say by participating in consultation and deliberation. Another takeaway is the highlighting of good governance. By its definition, good governance is related to how government delivers public goods and how the popular sovereignty is being practiced in decision making. China’s pursuit of good governance is based on the meritocracy, high-efficiency, responsiveness, supervision, and competitive selection examination of cadres, is regarded as the most vital source of legitimacy for the CCP insofar.

Therefore, in this chapter, two cases of, legislative consultation in the local (municipal-level) regulation-making process and grassroots deliberation in the rural Chinese villages,

are analyzed to demonstrate the ongoing consultative/deliberative governance in China. These two cases are categorized by different hierarchies, realms, venues and power relations. To disentangle the perplexing interactions and consultative/deliberative moment, three discursive dimensions are highlighted. In the first place, what is the intertwined relationship between and among the various participants and stakeholders. Secondly, how are those social uncertainties and sometimes resistances handled by consultative /deliberative approach. In other words, how is this *functionalist* side of Chinese deliberative democracy reconciled in China's governance. Finally, can this consultative/deliberative governance facilitate a more resilient authoritarianism in China beyond a mere consolidation of authoritarian rule.

These two cases certainly cannot exhaust the whole picture of the consultative/deliberative governance in China. Nevertheless, it provides a glimpse into various important issues in contemporary China's authoritarian politics: for example, interactions between the party-state and society, and the pursuit of good governance. This emphasis on governance is timely, especially when Western democracies are facing a governance decline in the post-pandemic era. These exceptional conditions have prompted some rethinking: do we need a strong government, and should the government establish its own authority through reinforced control, etc.? In this sense, it is interesting to explore Chinese experiences.

Besides connecting this consultative/deliberative governance with China's authoritarianism, another consideration is how this hybrid governance form is establishing some modern configurations on one hand, while still inheriting some traditional and cultural thinking and behavioral logic on the other hand. For example, public participation in legislative hearing still retains elements of Maoist mass mobilization. Full participation but has very little to do with the decision-making, though. Deliberation in grassroots is quite often described as 'Confucian deliberation', which values moral governance, elite moderation, and kinship network as indispensable elements of governance. In a nutshell, my observations through concrete cases indicate that Chinese consultative/deliberative governance embraces both the modern designs and cultural inheritance, which ultimately contributes to 'deliberative authoritarianism' rather than some other hypotheses.

2 Legislative Consultation (*Lifa Xieshang* 立法协商) at City-Level: Huizhou, Guangdong Province

Chinese legislation may be the best place to look into China's authoritarianism. The legislative games and infights amongst some main stockholders, the CCP and the NPC, sometimes engaged with the symbolic participation and consultation of others (e.g. the CPPCC and public). This always indicates how delicate the equilibrium of the ruling coalition (Truex, 2020) and the CCP's monopoly is. If there are still some ambiguities in using consultation or deliberation for reinterpreting Chinese 'deliberative democracy', in the legislative realm, consultation fits the best place. Firstly, as mentioned above, China's authoritarianism does not amount to complete the CCP control. Nevertheless, it is a cooperation and alliance with other major stockholders. As such, the CCP usually allows controllable participation and (un)willing consultation. Also, to respond to bottom-up needs (for example, potential uprisings and resistance to some sensitive legislations), authorities also have to listen to public opinion (for example, the online solicitation draft)¹³³. In this regard, consultation is essential in Chinese legislation, at best, in a symbolic sense.

Commonly, legislative institutions have a weak presence in China's legislative design. For example, the NPC is the sole legislature composed of a majority of the CCP members. Such design guarantees the party's firm control over legislation. Nevertheless, this is far from an undesirable conclusion on Chinese legislation. Superficially, China has made much effort in the legislative reforms in last three decades, including the proposal of 'rule of law (*yifa zhiguo* 依法治国)', as well as various legislative involvements such as legislative hearing, participation and consultation. These promotions give legislative consultation the first place in the five-socialist consultative/deliberative forms; the other four are administrative consultation, democratic consultation, political consultation and social deliberation¹³⁴. Although Chinese legislation is still maintaining its authoritarian nature, some change and reforms have brought a rather modern, efficiency and institutionalized legislative system

¹³³In national laws or amendments, public participation generally refers to comments on the online *exposure drafts*. In some cases, the public can put some pressure on public opinion to impel the legislators to make certain concessions. At the local level, as discussed in this case, public participation and consultation are more direct in the regulation-formulation process. They can be involved in various forms of participatory devices and consultative institutions, public hearings, and legislative consultation, for example, albeit it is still limited in scope given the CCP's monopoly of power.

¹³⁴See decisions on CCP Third Plenary Session of the Eighteenth Central Committee

(although some authors coined Chinese legislation at this stage is full of chaos and disorders). Against this background, legislative consultation not only provides a glance of its authoritarianism maintenance function; more importantly, it indicates how this function is linked with some good sides, for instance, listening to and learning from the limited public participation and consultation.

2.1 Chinese Authoritarian Legislation and Consultation

It seems, China's authoritarianism and authoritarian resilience have reached a compromise state to rebalance its authoritarian nature with the modernization and democratization, and also, this rebalancing is gradually consolidated through institutionalization and rule of law. Compared with the modernization in other realms, economics, for example, the CCP's monopoly on legislation has always remained prudent. The basic policies for governing the state according to law (rule *of* law) that were proposed in 1997 still contain many poignant remarks, not only in the legislation per se (e.g. see Peerenboom, 2001, 2002; Orts, 2001), but also in the legislation procedures, legislative participation and consultation (Keith, 1994; Chen, 1999; Pan, 2003), and legislative monopoly (Truex, 2018).

The Chinese legislation is mainly criticized for being incommensurable with its modernization¹³⁵. As a response, the CCP strives to advance the legislative system by engaging some modern designs on its agenda, for instance, the law on lawmaking named *Legislation Law* (*lifa fa* 立法法) was enacted in 2000 to solidify the NPC's position vis-à-vis other lawmaking and regulation-making institutions. Also, the latest *Civil Code* passed in 2020 indicates China's efforts to establish a unified and systemic legal system. Those works are jointly completed by two parts, namely, the main stockholders' coalition and policy-making, and symbolic outsiders' participations and consultations. These two dimensions ensure the legislative control while highlighting the *for-the-people* doctrine by engaging a wide public participation and collection of opinion. In this case, the interaction and consultation

¹³⁵This paradox remains, as I argue, Chinese legislation is modern in its forms. For instance, the Chinese regime is inherently more ruthless and efficient in passing laws, especially local (administrative) regulations. In its essence, Chinese legislation is monopolized by the infights amongst the main stakeholders and has little to do with outsiders. That said, such legislation is contending with a very diverse array of competing interests within this ruling coalition, and such compromise often leads to the reversal of the legislative content.

between and among subjects in the regulation-making process¹³⁶ are conducted to indicate a more dynamic legislation in authoritarianism

2.1.1 Chinese Authoritarian Legislation

In China, the NPC and its standing committee enjoy absolute legislative power, they do not face institutional ‘veto players’ that can block the policy making (Krehbiel, 2010). The influence of elite members and stakeholders on legislation is always higher than that of the public. Especially with the absence of legislative institutions in the authoritarian systems (Gandhi, 2008), it is usually accompanied by unanimous approval in the absence of public participation. More precisely, in authoritarian legislation, the adoption of laws and regulations faces quite weak public opposition and filibusters or other parliamentary tricks (Boix, and Svobik, 2013), which make the law-making process a “party-dominant” activity, even with indirect party involvement¹³⁷. The hundreds of laws and regulations successively enacted over the past two decades show the speed and efficiency of Chinese law-making. Nevertheless, it also leads to subsequent problems in implementation, which have lately been described as a “chaotic situation” filled with “disorder” and “inconsistencies” (Chen, 2000).

With the endorsement of a more open and consultative legislative process in the Legislation Law, those consultations, as Truex (2020) indicated, seem to be unreliable in authoritarian legislation dominated under a diverse set of “highly designed” geographical and bureaucratic constituencies within the CCP itself. China’s authoritarian lawmaking is featured with multiple stages and arenas, inside of which the legislative activities are followed by the CCP’s leadership and associated party organs. The CCP controls 70 to 75% of the seats in the NPC, and the remaining seats are doled out to unaffiliated deputies or democratic parties effectively under the CCP’s control. Given the CCP enjoys legislative dominance, these legislative drafts definitely get unanimous approval. Interventions do happen within the law-making process and also outside the implementation stage. For example, some CCP leaders may intervene on behalf of their favored policies, ensuring

¹³⁶Lawmaking privileges are divided among the NPC (national laws), State Council (administrative laws) and provincial governments (‘administrative’ regulations).

¹³⁷The CCP does not directly take part in the legislative drafting process. Nevertheless, it leads the way by predetermining the roles of participants to the process and by providing them with differentiated supports, by presetting drafting principles and goals or issuing policy documents and giving talks and reviewing drafts.

certain bills move forward and others do not, and these sorts of actors can advocate for their own interests, and they may seek to block, water down, or delay the legislation if it moves policy away from their desired outcome. There is generally no public record available for the interplay on the discussions within the CCP, which makes it the opaquest dimension in the Chinese lawmaking.

Nevertheless, this monopoly is not overwhelming. There is still some space left and well-designed for public participation and consultation which contend with a diverse array of competing interests within the ruling coalition (Boix and Svobik, 2013). This has been described as “consultative authoritarianism” by He and Thøgersen (2010), and later reinterpreted in Teets’ (2013, 2014) analysis with a top-down interaction. This kind of consultation is outside the authoritarian institutional dictatorship and open to discussion, with the rebalance between and among the CCP, ruling coalition and citizenry. Also, this resilient mechanism and conditional freedom in a way achieved an equilibrium of the elite bargaining and slim public voice. Various newly designed “input-institutions”, for instance, legislative hearing, expert meeting, etc. channeled a way for the public involvement in the law-making, mainly as a reference. In some cases, the legislative consultation can be quite responsive when facing high public attention and potential unrest.

Xi (2006) investigated institutional participation in China’s law making. It is quite common for the key stakeholders to take advantage of institutional designs and exert their influence through the control and decision-making power in legislation, usually with the pre-determined legislative plans or public hearing and discussions on given topics. This top-down collection of public preferences via controllable and legitimized forms is far from fully “deliberative” as the regime is not bound to actually incorporate citizen inputs in any way. In addition to these institutional and formal legislative practices, there is now more spontaneous participation in some legislative consultations. More radically, for some rather sensitive topics, for instance, the re-education system and administrative litigation, public pressure may force lawmakers to make certain concessions. In this game, disadvantaged public is given more channels to participate, and the state finds a compromise to quell the public anger and (potential) uprisings. There are many cities where citizens’ participation and consultation are written into the regulations as policy obligations.

Unfortunately, whether a procedural or consequentialism perspective, this achievement is superficial. Because of prudent central legislations and amendments, legislators cannot

commonly advance legislation in their expedencies with the congressional filibusters or the binding legal precedents (Boix and Svolik, 2013). Nevertheless, their substantial influence on the legislation makes it destined to be the elite's contestation. For the more dynamic local legislative participation and consultation in recent decades, public attention and dissatisfaction can propel local legislators into action. Nevertheless, these cases are rare. Most local regulations are enacted with the harmonious vote tallies. Although Chinese legislation, like its politics, is very cautious in its reform and advance. However, the multi-party interaction presented in the local regulation-making process indicates another stable and efficient legislative model. It can be a top-down (un)willing action, or a bottom-up impetus. It nevertheless facilitates a way for a reconciliation of the party's control, legislator's domination and public participation and consultation.

2.1.2 Legislative Participation and Consultation in Chinese Local Legislation

As for the consultation in the Chinese authoritarian legislation, it is a kind of unpromising terrain for political 'deliberation' inside of which the public is passively considered as a mere consultative body and a source of information, unlike the Western legislative 'deliberation', for instance, the congressional bargaining model offered by Bessette (1997). Western scholars (e.g. Stokes, 1998; Follesdal, 2000; Warren, 2007; Johnstone, 2008; Christiano, 2012) assert crucial role of democratic deliberation in legislations for advancing the common good and legitimacy in legislation. Empirical evidence (e.g. Lascher, 1996; Mucciaroni and Quirk, 2010; Aitamurto and Landemore, 2013; Bächtiger, 2014) were also conducted for justifying how the legislative decisions are being made through both the parliamentary and public deliberation. But this method may be problematic in the authoritarian context with the absence of some deliberative prerequisites (for example, a single ruling party, limited public sphere). Also, as 'authoritarian consultation' described, legislative consultation in the very local regulation-making process is more likely oriented towards maintaining stability and pragmatism¹³⁸, public consultation in such processes is

¹³⁸These two features are intertwined, as in authoritarian settings, ordinary citizenry have little chance to influence both the authoritarian leaders and elites' coalition. The potential uprisings and resistances in large-scale political mobilization are considered as the optimal choice to make the regime take the public grievances into consideration. In this sense, legislators have to adopt some tactical methods to handle these threats from festering in order to maintain the social order and stability.

merely the opinion-making instead of ‘vote player’ for the law-passing. This openness indicates that public voices matter, but only in a symbolic way.

Usually, it is the legislative and administrative organs who initiate the legislative process. Nevertheless, what are their options to provide legitimacy to the rules they produce? This mainly refers to the ‘legitimization by procedure’ coined by Luhmann (1998), in which the public consultation and deliberation play an important role in fulfilling this legitimized function. The proceduralism insists that, at least, the consultation should be embedded in all stages in the nine rungs in legislative process (Schefbeck, 2010), namely, (1)awareness (agenda setting), (2)specification (policy modelling), (3)drafting (normative modelling), (4)consultation, (5)deliberation, (6)decision, (7)promulgation, (8)consolidation and (9)evaluation. Nevertheless, such procedural restrictions are problematic and unpracticable in an authoritarian context, as Tanner (1999) summarized that the Chinese local regulation making with a three-phase process of proposal (agenda-setting), consultation and review (some inter-agency consensus building) and adoption (law passing). Such setting omits some essential public influence on the legislative outcomes.

A more precious portrayal of these procedural settings indicates that, firstly, the lawmaking committees within the local government and Local People’s Congress (LPC) consider bills drafted by LPC deputies. Unlike the central law makings, local regulation making mainly focus on three limited subjects of the urban and rural construction and management, environmental protection, historical and cultural protect. Such legislative realms are often described as lower hierarchical ranking and weak public attention¹³⁹ legislations according to the legislative urgency; The following consultation and review stage are the most cumbersome part, often with bureaucratic infighting within ruling coalition. This process determines the basic legislative outcomes¹⁴⁰, thereafter, consultations are conducted only on some given topics. The final enactment mainly involves the party’s review and debates by the LPC of all the drafts within the legal process. The LPC has routinely posted draft laws on its website for public comments. Nonetheless, this cannot change much and

¹³⁹According to the legislative urgencies, Class I laws are to be submitted for consultation during this term of the NPC (任期内提请审议的法律草案), and Class II laws are those that are to be researched, drafted, and scheduled to be submitted for consultation when conditions are mature (研究起草、条件成熟时安排审议的法律草案). Available at <https://npcobserver.com/>. [Accessed 12 Nov. 2018].

¹⁴⁰According to Rory (2020), given different legislative division and attention, authoritarian policymaking is driven by an interaction between and among the division within the ruling coalition and citizen issue attention. Specifically, for a departmental administrative regulation, there will be containment and participation of related government departments, sometimes with long bargaining and argument, making the process long and complex.

usually is accompanied by unanimous approval. In a nutshell, the public is largely excluded in the first and third stage of local regulation-making process, their engagement mainly happens in the second stage, with limited influence on some minutiae.

Nonetheless, we should not be too pessimistic about these rubber-stamp legislations. Although public voices weight less in such processes, the final law strikes a compromise between (potential) public grievance and the main stakeholders' vested interests. It first achieved a very *symbolic* public participation and consultation, especially when Western parliamentary 'legislative deliberation' is criticized by its elite bargaining nature and consistently with legislative gridlock (institutional delay with low efficient law making). Some Chinese local legislations provide the testing ground for encouraging more public participation and consultation on the premise that without involving some sensitive topics, this could be a long way for approaching the ideal legislative deliberation. Nevertheless, if there is any hope, it must from the local legislative consultation.

2.2 Case Interpretations of the Legislative Consultation in Huizhou, Guangdong Province

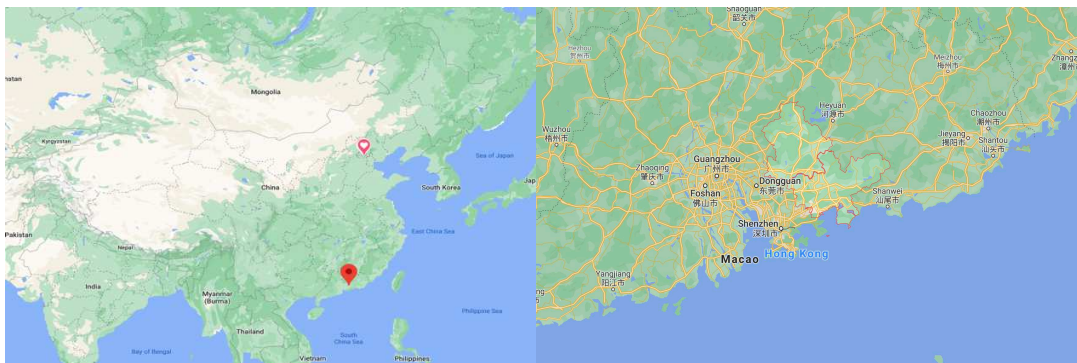


Image 12 Huizhou in China

Image 13 Huizhou in Guangdong Province

2.2.1 Local Regulation-Making in a Historical City

The huge amount of local regulations enacted over the last two decades not only share commonalities, but also adjusted according to local features in a timely manner. By the end of March 2016, the number of local regulations in effect had reached 19,048, including

9,872 local regulations and 9,176 local government regulations¹⁴¹. Zhang Xiansheng, the deputy secretary of the United Front Work of the CPC central committee, therefore highlighted that, “the local legislative consultation is the concentrated embodiment of the mass line (legacies from the Mao’s era, namely, consulting the mass, interpreting their suggestions for enforcing the resulting policies) in the local legislation”. Against this background, case studies in Huizhou, Guangdong will focus on an analysis of those participatory devices, consultations and interactions among the main participants and shed the lights on how the monopolized legislative consultation rebalances public opinion input and the final controlled law passing.

Huizhou, backed by the Luofu Mountain, adjacent to Shenzhen and Hong Kong, is located in the south of Daya Bay, in which the Dongjiang River winds more than 100 kilometers inside and belongs to the Pearl River Delta. With the city of Heyuan in the north, Shanwei in the east, Dongguan and Guangzhou in the west. Huizhou is abundant in natural resources and is the only city in Guangdong with “one lake and two rivers”. There are currently 23 historical and cultural districts in Huizhou, such as Jindai Street, Shuidong Street and Tielu Lake that are all cultural protection units at the provincial level. The total protected core areas are about 20.6 square kilometers. In addition, there are three historical sections including Huixin West Street, Taoziyuan and the Urban Lane above 14.7hm². Moreover, in the country-level, there are registered 100 non-movable cultural relics, 401 cultural protection units, 202 historical buildings and 3507 ancient and famous trees. Against this background, the contentious part in the regulation-making process lies in the resettlement of local inhabitants (including the relocation, compensation) and the potential local uncertainties during the demolition process; meanwhile, the challenges also lie in the proper handling of the legislative competition between the Huizhou government and Huizhou People’s Congress (HPC).

The main conflict moments refer to the contradictions between protecting historic sites and seeking the fast regional economic development. So far, very few of the higher-level laws¹⁴² have stipulated the protection of historical cities, or sometimes with vague and rigid provisions. Conversely, this gives local authorities much space for autonomous

¹⁴¹Method set net, available at: <http://www.Chinalawindex.Cn/>. [Accessed 12 Nov. 2017].

¹⁴²Only two main central legislations are now available in regulating the protection of the local relics. *Regulations on Protection of Famous Historical and Cultural Cities, Towns and Villages (2008) enacted by State Council*; *Protection of Cultural Relics in People’s Republic of China (1982, 2015) enacted by NPC*.

operations, and facilitates a much more flexible and accessible public consultation. Another lens refers to the redistribution of legislative power between the government and the HPC, which played two main roles in the local legislation: the coordinator of conflicts of interest and the spokespersons of public opinion. It should be the sole *dominator* of the local legislation, but the fact is the local party committees usually have the final say on legislative plans (the Huizhou party committees claimed that it did not intervene in the legislative plan-forming, but such plans did have to be approved by the party first, and the final enactment should follow the party's afterwards-supervision). Also, in reality, the government will undertake more legislative tasks than the HPC, given that the former is more capable in personnel and resources. Hence, this legislative game amongst the party committee, the government, and the HPC is also an important internal observation in the legislative consultation.

2.2.2 Multiple Interactions and Consultations in Regulation-Formulation

The enactment of Huizhou regulation went through three main stages, in accordance with a more general procedural principle that local legislation must be followed. It is divided into 13 important sub-stages (see table 1) and follows four axes including consultation, timing, content and the main participants. It took almost five years from the legislative inception at the very beginning of 2012 to the final approval at the end of 2016. During which 40 consultative forums, 6 expert demonstration meetings, 1 evaluation meeting (before the voting), more than 10 field investigations and 1 legislative hearing were held. Compared with public participation in the past regulations, the Huizhou regulation achieved a rather fair information publicity and public engagement. Internally, Huizhou had more clearly demarcated the legislative boundary between government and HPC; the party committee only made (decisive) recommendations for the annual legislative plans. Externally, various participatory channels are provided. Albeit the legislative consultation is mostly held in and relies on closed-door meetings within professional experts, it is still achieved a superficial success in terms of public engagement.

This complex formulation process, from the legislative proposal to the public participation and consultation, then to the final enactment indicate a perplexing yet dynamic interaction amongst various participants. At the end of 2014, the HPC standing committee set up a

special investigation group for questions and answers on the local legislative requirements, followed by the local legislative database in Sun Yat-Sen University was established, in which more than ten legislative initiatives were intensively issued, such as the Xizhijiang and Huizhou regulation. The HPC standing committee conducted several rounds of fieldwork and solicited opinions from various governmental departments, thus forming the annual legislative plan for 2016. This efficient adoption of the legislative plan is due to less conflicts of interest between the Huizhou government and HPC, and less intervention by the HLP. Also, outsiders (experts, the LPPCC members, ordinary public, etc.) could raise their concerns when the given drafting agency or entity visited them. The interviewees even provided the author with a comparison table of public opinion polls before and after the legislation¹⁴³.

¹⁴³However, the concrete public opinion and memos are considered non-public documents. Interviews with the officials who were involved in the drafting processes in HLP.

Table 5 Formation Process of Huizhou Regulation

Stage	Year	Consultative and Deliberative Process	Participants
The 1 st stage	2012	The Huizhou Housing and Urban-Rural Planning and Construction Bureau (HUPCB), as the leading unit, cooperated with the Departments of Culture, Radio, Film, TV, Press and Publication of Huizhou (CRFTPP), as well as other relevant government departments, and invited experts to learn from the experience of previous legislation approved, and afterwards, carry out the legislative research work together.	The HUPCB, the CRFTPP, experts
	2013	The HUPCB, as the leading unit again, drafted and reported to the Huizhou Municipal Government (MG) for approval of the “Interim Provisions on the Protection and Management of Historical and Cultural Sites of Huizhou” and the “Interim Measures on the Protection and Management of Historical and Cultural Streets of Huizhou”.	The HUPCB, Huizhou MG
	01.2015	A comprehensive assessment of the implementation effects of those above government regulations was carried out (before the drafting of the local legislation, usually, the local government regulation will be drafted first).	The HPC, Huizhou MG
	04.2015	Huizhou Municipal People’s Congress (MPC) Standing Committee started an investigation on the needs of local legislation in mid-April 2015. A special group was established for collecting social opinions and suggestions for the legislative preference, the main research questions are concentrated on “urban and rural construction management and environmental protection”.	The MPC Standing Committee, government departments, the public
	05.2015	Huizhou MPC Standing Committee therefore held a special research seminar, for which a local legislative project database was established and the legislative plan for 2015-2016 was also formulated. The public could make comments on the plan, especially in terms of “urban and rural construction and management, environmental protection, historical and cultural sites protection” through Huizhou PC information network, Huizhou Daily and Huizhou rule of law net. Relevant	The MPC Standing Committee, Legal Affairs Committee, the Public

		opinions and suggestions could also be directly mailed to the MPC Standing Committee and the Legal Affairs Committee or the e-mail address.	
	10.2015	The regulation start-up was extensively studied by the experts consultation meeting. After which, the Municipal Legal Affairs Bureau submitted a review report to the MG and was soon approved by the MG executive meeting. The regulation initials thus submitted to the Huizhou MPC Standing Committee for consultation and were reviewed and approved by the 139th MG executive meeting, once again, the draft was submitted to the 34th meeting of the 11th HPC Standing Committee for the first review, following which a research group was formed within Huizhou MPC Standing Committee for better preparing the draft.	The Municipal Legal Affairs Bureau, experts, the MPC Standing Committee, MG
The 2 nd stage	12.2015	Huizhou MPC Standing Committee thus issued the “Huizhou Regulations” (draft for comments), in which relevant legislative highlights were proposed for public consultation, such as effectiveness of the protection, implementation of protection list system, punishment system for the destruction of the historical blocks, etc.	The MPC Standing Committee, the public
	01.2016	After the first review, Huizhou MPC Standing Committee established a working group led by the Rule of Law and Work Committee, and staff in Huizhou HUCB, CRFTPP and legislative advisors and consultants conducted the research and revision work in an orderly manner. In January 2016, Huizhou Regulations was listed as the consultative project of the 2016 legislative plan by Huizhou MPC Standing Committee, and also highlighted its importance in the plan.	The MPC Standing Committee, Rule of Law and Work Committee, the HUPCB, CRFTPP
	05.2016	The HUPCB organized the drafting work of Huizhou Regulations, which was reviewed and submitted to the Huizhou MPC Standing Committee Legal Affairs Bureau in the last stage. On May 24, 2016, the 34th meeting of the Standing Committee of the 11th HPC of Huizhou reviewed the draft for the second time.	The HUPCB, MPC Standing Committee Legal Affairs Bureau
	06.2016	Huizhou Municipal Law Committee held a special symposium with representatives from the government departments. Meanwhile, consultation meeting among the public organizations of	The Municipal Law Committee, representatives, government department, the public

		Shuidong Street, Danshui Old Street and representatives of the house owners also held for solidity again of the public willing. The symposium allowed a discussion with those who went to Meizhou, Chaozhou and other cities for experience learning.	
	08.2016	The Legal Work Committee of the Huizhou MPC Standing Committee revised the draft according to the suggestions of the MG Standing Committee and formed the “Huizhou Regulations” (opinion draft). The 36 th meeting of the 11th Standing Committee of Huizhou MPC conducted a third review of the regulations. The legal office forwarded the regulation to MG for comments. The Legal Committee revised and improved the regulations and entrusted the Municipal Local Legislative Research Center to conduct pre-voting evaluations.	The Legal Work Committee, the MPC Standing Committee, MG, Local legislative research center
The 3 rd stage	10.2016	The third review made several amendments after the first and second round. In view of the lack of supervision for example, the regulation clarified the duties of the main bodies. It is also stipulated that governments at or above the county level shall set up special funds for the protection of famous historical and cultural cities and establish a protection list in order, which shall be included in the unified management of the information management system established by the municipal government and open to the public.	The Municipal Law Committee, municipal government
	12.2016	There were 32 votes in favour and none against, so Huizhou regulation finally adopted on December 01, 2016 in Guangdong Province at the 38th meeting of the Standing Committee of the 11th People’s Congress of Huizhou and approved by the Standing Committee of the 12th Provincial People’s Congress at the 29th meeting of the People’s Congress, announced on December 19, 2016, took effect on March 01, 2017.	The MPC Standing Committee

The combination of traditional and innovative consultative institutions (see table 2) shows the Huizhou government's efforts to expand the public participation in the local legislation. Several previous regulations promulgated in Huizhou mostly emphasized the unity¹⁴⁴ of the Legal Affairs Commission (*falü shiwu weiyuanhui* 法律事务委员会) with the interplay of the HPC Standing Committee members, those with official background¹⁴⁵. This kind of consultation only engages the ordinary public in specific disputes when some potential threats are involved (e.g. stage two), such as petitions. The professional opinions played an important role in the process of regulations formulation. Interviewees also admitted that the government has limited trust in the public in some professional issues.

When the HPC Standing Committee drafted the annual legislative plan¹⁴⁶, it only solicited opinions from the party committees and governments, and merely published the regulation (draft) on the *Huizhou People's University Information Network* (Huang and Xiao, 2015). Other information, for instance, the more sensitive issues of demolition and the aftermaths have not been opened to the public. Thus, the basic consultations are far more deviated from the fair discussions on this regulation per se due to the very partial information received. In other words, the consultation before and during the drafting stage was mainly aimed at identifying the general concerns, nevertheless serving the later unanimously passing rate. Public dissatisfaction and counterinterviews did not delay or cancel the annual legislative plan. Also, this condescending regulation-making in Huizhou held various hearings but only for those invited. According to the interviews with Zhou, member of the Legislative Council, "this one-way communicative and formalistic participation somehow demotivated public participation, such paternalistic governance (the government controls the very initiative of

¹⁴⁴This 'uniform legal hierarchy' is consisting with the legacies of China's unified political system (see chapter 5, articles 78-80 of the Legislation Law), it refers to legislation in different hierarchies which must not conflict with each other and must comply with the Chinese Constitution, legislative activities should adhere to the CCP's leadership.

¹⁴⁵Public involvement is quite limited to those 'representatives', besides the cadres from the relevant governmental departments and agencies, according to a letter from the Huizhou Legislative Committee on the organization of the '*Huizhou Regulation (Draft)*' consultation symposium (2016), outsiders that without official background mainly include the heads of the Danshui Sub-district Office and relevant community neighborhood committee (10) and the representatives of stakeholders (10). Compared to the random selection that with greater uncertainties, the HLP is inclined to those (designated) representatives' participation according to author's interview.

¹⁴⁶The first stage mainly focuses on the formation of the draft, during which the initial legislation group investigating and soliciting opinions in a quite limited publicity. Outsiders rarely have a chance and access to the close-door discussion. Some experts, the lawyers and legists, for example, can be consulted for references. As for the third stage, also the opaquest decision-making process within which the regulation is enacted with the merely legislatures' vote and without sufficient feedback on the first two stages.

consultation) is described as the legislative making ‘for the public’ but ‘of the public’.¹⁴⁷” by some legislators in Huizhou. Also, as another interviewee put it:

Obviously, there were intensive close-door infightings before a so-called legislative draft opening to discussion. For example, Huizhou government wanted to empower the HUPCB with penalty power so as to highlight the execution efficiency, but this proposal was rejected by some HPC members, given that it may bring gray fiscal revenue. Some such conflicts can reach a tacit and compromised consensus after pre-discussions. That means the ‘main problems’ had been already predetermined after the main stockholders’ discussion. The later public consultation was more a formality for the procedural requirements and can only involve some small-beer issues.

Another question that needs to be highlighted is ‘departmental bureaucracy’; that is, in practice, the fact that the HPC, being the main legislative body, is sometimes incapable of undertaking every local regulation making. Conversely, the government (departments) has more resources and capabilities to do this. In Huizhou, the HPC usually authorizes some governmental departments like the HUPCB to draft some legislative proposals, but this government-led and administrative-based legislation (this type is common in some other Chinese cities) often skip the LPC’s scrutinization by passing with some hoggish regulation. For this dilemma, the HPC has redressed the relationship between the two in the last two decades (see table 1) by reemphasizing the LPC’s domination in the local regulation-making process¹⁴⁸ on the other hand, nevertheless cooperating with the government in some legislative drafts.

¹⁴⁷The author interviewed the members of the Huizhou Legislative Committee who were involved in the whole legislative process in Huizhou regulation.

¹⁴⁸The *Decision of the CCP Central Committee on Several Major Issues in Promoting the Rule of Law in an All-round Way* (23.10.2014) emphasizes, “improving the institutional mechanisms for legislative work led by the NPC and giving full play to the leading role of the NPC and its Standing Committee in legislative work.” Available at: http://www.xinhuanet.com//politics/2014-10/28/c_1113015372.htm. [Accessed 01 Nov. 2017]. Traditional track for enacting local regulation as follows: HPC and its Stand Committee propose (draft)-discussion with the government (departments)-Reported to the Guangdong province; However, the Huizhou regulation: Huizhou MG (for the case, it refers to HUPCB) proposes (draft)-HPC approval (some cases, this step can omit)-Reported to the Guangdong province.

Table 6 Consultative Institution Settings in Huizhou Regulation-making Process

Consultative Bodies	Function	Composition	Note
Legal Committee of the HPC	Responsible for the review of the regulations		Equipped with six administrative staffs, three government post for procurement of services
Legal Council of Standing Committee of HPC	Specific responsibility for local legislative work	One special office and two departments	
The legislative advisory think tanks	Consultation on sensitive issues in legislation, consulting service	Full-time, part-time researchers	Well-known experts and scholars from universities and national research institutions such as Peking, Wuhan and Sun Yat-Sen University, as well as 91 people with high professional level which are rich in practical experience in related fields.
Huizhou Local Legislative Research Center (Huizhou College Local Legislative Research Institute)	Intellectual support	Full-time, part-time researchers	Twenty legislative collaborating units
Legislative collaborating units such as Sun Yat-Sen University Public Law Research Center, Huizhou Lawyers Association, law firms and research institutes	Carry out expert arguments for prominent contradiction and controversial points	Professors, experts, lawyers, judges	The HPC standing committee, the committee on urban construction and environmental investment
Committee for the protection of historic and cultural cities	Responsible for coordinating and supervising the protection of historic and cultural cities and building a communicative bridge between the government and public	A special committee	
Leading group for drafting work	Responsible for drafting work	HPC, SLC, MG, the committee on urban construction and environmental investment	

In a nutshell, the aforementioned two dimensions of the predetermined legislation within coalitions (both procedurally and consequentially), as well as formalist consultations, and games between the legislators (e.g. the HPC) and the government, are analytical helpful to recontextualize the legislative processes in an authoritarian context. This process has been highly institutionalized and standardized (as shown in table 1 and 2). Lacking filibusters and voting adversaries may facilitate the efficiency-oriented legislation in Chinese localities. Nevertheless, without much public engagement, such legislation also risks becoming a tool for authoritarian rulers to seek individual or fractional interests.

Table 6 List of Local Legislation Pertaining to Famous Historical and Cultural Cities in Huizhou

Regulations	Proposing Bodies	Issuing Organization	Date of Issue	Serial Number
Provisional Regulations on the Administration of Pinghai Ancient City in Huidong county	HPC Standing Committee	People's Government of Huidong County	07.1992	No. Huidong [1992] 46
Measures for Administration of the Scope of Protection of Cultural Relics Capitals at the Municipal Level in Huizhou	HPC Standing Committee	Huizhou MG	01.1993	No. Huizhou [1993] 01
Notice Concerning Amending the Measures for Administration of Scope of Protection in Cultural Relics Units at the Municipal Level in Huizhou	HPC Standing Committee	Huizhou MG	07.2002	No. Huizhou [2002] 90
Ibid	HPC Standing Committee	Huizhou MG	02.2009	No. Huizhou [2009] 28
Provisional Regulations on Protection and Management of Famous Historical and Cultural Cities in Huizhou	HPC Standing Committee	Huizhou MG	04.2013	No. Huizhou [2013] 24
Interim Measures for Protection and Managing of Historic and Cultural District in Huizhou	HPC Standing Committee	Huizhou MG	04.2013	No. Huizhou [2013] 25
Interim Measures for Protection and Utilization of Ancient Villages in Huizhou	HPC Standing Committee	Huizhou MG	04.2013	No. Huizhou [2013] 26
Strengthening Public Participation in the Protection of Historic and Cultural Cities in Huizhou MG	HPC Standing Committee	Huizhou MG	04.2013	No. Huizhou [2013] 27

Measures on the Protection and Management of Ancient and Famous Trees in Huizhou	HPC Standing Committee	Huizhou MG	04.2013	No. Huizhou [2013] 59
Interim Measures for Management of the Application and Evaluation of Municipal Intangible, Cultural Heritage List Items in Huizhou	HPC Standing Committee	Huizhou MG	12.2013	No. Huizhou [2013] 79
Interim Measures for Management and Application of Representative Inheritors of the List of Municipal Intangible Cultural Heritage in Huizhou	HPC Standing Committee	Huizhou MG	12.2013	No. Huizhou [2013] 83
Huizhou Regulation	Huizhou MG	Huizhou MG	12.2016	No. Huizhou [2016] 83
Measures for Protection and Management of Huizhou Intangible Cultural Heritage	Huizhou MG	Huizhou MG	08.2017	No. Huizhou [2017] 95

2.2.3 Formalistic yet Stable-Oriented Local Regulation Making

The Huizhou case failed to mobilize large-scale public participation due to two main reasons. First of all, the HPC and Huizhou government absolutely manipulated the public engagement in the public hearing (selective representatives, topics, venues, etc.), despite various participatory devices being highly stressed in *Local legislative Regulations in Guangdong Province (2016)*¹⁴⁹. In the mainly second consultative stage, more accessible participation consists in online solicitation for opinions with very limited feedback. Legislative hearings and mini-public discussions are favored by representatives; secondly, according to the table 2, consultative institutions rarely benefit from non-professional public opinion and are overdependent on professionalism (table 6). It turns out that those professional inputs are sometimes unreliable given to the misunderstandings on the practical situations. Without involving a more meaningful communication and insufficient access to official information, public interests are marginalized, or at least, in jeopardy. The public opinion adoption, according to the *Annual Report of Guangdong Provincial Legislation*, is far below 10%¹⁵⁰.

¹⁴⁹Available at: <http://npc.people.com.cn/n1/2016/0203/c14576-28107372.html>. [Accessed 22 Dec. 2017].

¹⁵⁰See research notes by Deng, deputy director of the HPC Standing Committee, for the survey activities before the second review on 25.08.2016. Available at: <http://rd.huizhou.gov.cn/pages/cms/hzrd/html/scdy/93d853a8564546be0156bf547bad007e.html?cataId=fb70c10b5147401891ca36d977cc4cfe>. [Accessed 22 Dec. 2017].

Table 7 Participants in Local Legislative Consultation Meeting

	Professors of Universities	Research Centers	Environmental Departments	Social Experts	Humane Experts	Historical Experts	Literature Experts	Representatives of the MG	
No.	8	2	2	2	2	2	2	4	R
Total	20							4	1/5

Note: R=Ratio, ratio between professionals and government representatives, the representatives from the relevant government departments, for example, the HUPCB and CRFTPP, are more ‘down to earth’ for responding public concerns compared to those experts.

Those dilemmas are faced by most nonemergency local legislations hierarchized to the “low-attention” and “low-division” categories. According to Truex (2018), legislation in China can be divided into four hierarchies with the high (low) division and attention corresponding to different (central /local) laws. But Truex has little to say on what this symbolic impotence means to Chinese authoritarian legislation. Like other institutional designs and interactions, legislative consultation is of importance firstly to ensure the institutional and legitimized public participation¹⁵¹. That said, even the CCP and the LPC predetermine the legislative plan and monopolize the outcomes. They still have to take consideration of the potential resistance in the following consultation (e.g. stage 2). This external pressure prompts the main stockholders to balance the infightings and interests redistribution in a controllable way. For example, the HPC rejected the HUPCB’s proposal of carrying out the administrative penalty, but the later could enjoy certain punishment according to the very vague higher-level law (e.g. Administrative Penalties Law), and these compromises were endorsed by the HPC.

The protection of historical sites requires citizens’ relocation; while this turbulent process has brought much of public grievances and resistances in the last three decades, Chinese authorities are now realizing that repression is not the best way to solve these uncertainties and maintain a good image. More and more cases indicate that an equilibrium is being retained amongst the official control, public participation and resistance. Before the Huizhou Regulation was launched in 2012, the HPC and Legislative Committee members had talked to and interviewed the residents in some informal visits (accompanied by the

¹⁵¹This legitimized requirement for public participation is not only stipulated in the Legislation Law (e.g. Articles 34 and 58). It is also stipulated in many local (administrative) regulations (Guangdong Province and Huizhou city).

neighborhood committee) to collect their preferences. These preparations have alleviated many obstacles for the subsequent legislation. These internal and external efforts are consistent with legislation in China's authoritarian system. Superficially, legislators cater for the public demands and take public grievances into consideration. In some modern settings, especially at the very local level, various participatory and consultative channels indicated the public that they were "doing something" and that progress was being made (Egan, 2014), even though in a very uneven way in scope and quality. This symbolic interaction ensures a fragile balance among the party, LPC, government and the public, and also contributes to an efficient legislative system.

2.2.4 LPPCC, Rubber Stamp in Local Legislative Consultation?

Debates over the LPPCC's role in local legislation making have taken on two extremes. Some authors (e.g. Peng, 2015; Zhang, 2016; Tan, 2018) argued that it is precisely necessary for the engagement of the LPPCC, given its wide coverage of constituencies and elite links, hence, the LPPCC's consultations are more representative. However, opposing views (e.g. Shi, 2015; Yang, 2016) indicate that the LPPCC's influence weakens as hierarchy decreases, with very limited functions. For example, the involvement of Huizhou PPCC (HPPCC) is mostly found in local stipulations, there are very few cases where the HPPCC actively participates or organizes the legislative consultations. Interestingly, compared with preset specialized legislative advisory organizations (universities and research units), the HPPCC's consultative role is more like rubber stamp than lacking professional legal skills. Also, for political considerations, the chairman of the HPPCC is not a member of the Local Party Standing Committee (Peng, 2015), the legislative initiatives were usually decided by the *heads* of the Huizhou Party Standing Committee, and sometimes the HPC leaders. The HPPCC rarely accessed this decision-making circle.

Discussions on the facilitation of the LPPCC's role in local legislative consultations in recent decades mainly failed for three reasons. First of all, in the official framing, the CCP's 'political leadership' overwhelms legislation, especially in the *Opinions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on Strengthening the Party's Leading Legislative Work* enacted in 2016. Although it reemphasizes the CCP's leadership is not 'dominant', the predetermined-legislative plan and after-approval ballot ensure the CCP has the final say on what laws can be passed while others not. The LPPCC is not included in these two stages; secondly,

aforementioned, the LPC, being the solely legal legislative body, is weaker in its decision-making power, and gradually gives way to the administrative-led legislation in last decade. That said, the intertwined relationship amongst the party, LPC and government blurs its functions and boundaries in legislation, and the LPPCC is excluded in this game. Thirdly, the LPPCC are considered as the specialized platform for legislative consultation, but its consultation is not legally binding. A LPPCC member cannot participate in the CCP's close-door meeting. In my observations, the HPPCC members participated in legislative consultation only when invited.

In short, the LPPCC members are usually passively participated in the local legislative consultation. According to the interviews with the HPC members, in most cases, the HPC will *listen* to the HPPCC's opinions, while decision makings were made with the Party Committee. Despite the LPPCC members' usual extensive societal links, they are not more competitive than those legal scholars, lawyers, and university professors in the legislative realm. Only two HPPCC members were presented in a consultative meeting of twenty participants (see table 7) organized by the HPC. Once again, the unempowered and non-legally binding LPPCC seems to be marginalized in (local) legislation, although the HPC insisted on the important function of the HPPCC. It remains theoretical. In this sense, the LPPCC can, at best, achieve a symbolic meaning in China's local legislation but is far from having real influence.

2.3 Conclusion

China's legislation is closely linked to its authoritarian politics, albeit the N/LPC are the main legislators, nevertheless, the CCP always controls the majority of seats within. Also, without judicial independence, Chinese lawmaking developed a rather special authoritarian legislative model, chaotic yet relatively stable, sometimes efficient. China's legislative reforms in the last decades have given the LPC and governments more (administrative) regulation-making power. Local legislation has therefore become an important test field for studying China's authoritarian lawmaking and "rule of law" policy. The legislative consultation in Huizhou involved various participants and stakeholders and their interactions facilitated the contextualization of the local regulation-making processes. Meanwhile, the Huizhou case, although it proves to be a questionable local regulation-making process, still unfolds the perplexing intra- and inter-interaction between and

among various participants and highlights the HPPCC's symbolic function. Such interaction and consultation connected with Chinese authoritarianism and rebalanced the consistent changing in Chinese local legislation.

The legislative gridlock in the higher hierarchy and law-making in China is analyzed in Truex's (2018) case study, within which laws are delayed or postponed, and the key constituencies within the ruling coalition will exacerbate these delays. Conversely, this dilemma can be more easily handled in the compromises and concessions among the local legislators, the LPC and government, for example. Another takeaway of outside public pressures, which mainly refers to public participation, consultation and (potential) dissatisfaction, is that it can also push the legislators to make some changes (concessions) on the legislative process and policy making, and the officials are usually responsive on the more sensitive topics. Also, interestingly to note, in order to dilute the CCP's (in)direct monopoly on the legislative plan, process and results, more (in)formal participatory channels and settings are designed. Some changes, like the more accessible and powerful network supervision in the last decades, tends to make the legislators more careful in their processing of public opinion and consultation. In any case, legislative consultation depicts a vibrant law-making multi-interaction amongst the intra- and inter-participants, and it contributes to a more resilient Chinese authoritarianism with a more stable legislative system.

3 Deliberation in Chinese Rural Villages in Shandong Province

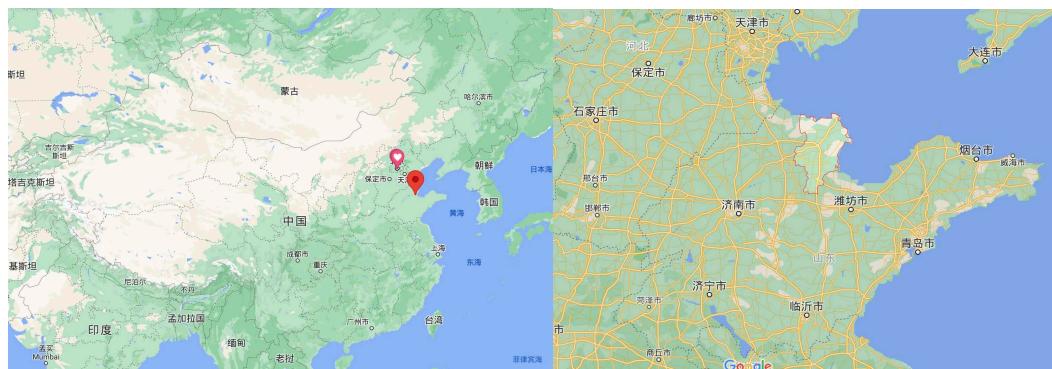


Image 14 Dongying in China

Image 15 Dongying in Shandong Province

We talked a lot about deliberation and deliberative democracy, and students on this realm have also actively explored possible deliberative forms in different cultures, political systems and contexts. Nevertheless, those efforts have to avoid loosely defining deliberation per se. In other words, this paradox between the normative standards and empirical practices should be handled properly to make a more inclusive and down-to-earth deliberative system. Bearing this in mind, my case studies in Chinese rural villages bring something new to deliberative democracy studies (especially empirically) that are based on Confucianism. Unlike democratic deliberation in liberalism, such discourse follows and carries out a cultural and traditional logic, simultaneously, with the democratic and modern outlets.

China's rural villages comprise a large population and have a great deal of autonomy. Basic deliberation also has relatively independent origins, in the very work of *Deliberative Culture* written by Sass and Dryzek (2014), "...if the capacity to deliberate is universal *yet* variously expressed across context, there is good reason to believe that such variations are at least partially explainable in the cultural terms." But it seems, the democratic politics depend only upon the liberal culture insofar (e.g. Habermas, 1990). Those democrats have little to say this cultural influence on deliberation in the authoritarian context, somehow, failed to explore a more inclusive and open deliberative picture with a narrow-minded focus on divided societies and pluralism only in the democracies. Meanwhile, in order to avoid overemphasizing China's uniqueness, this case analysis aims to rationalize how this Confucian deliberation works in rural Chinese villages; and how this deliberation is embedded in the grassroots governance that illustrates a different look from Western public deliberation.

3.1 Chinese Grassroots Deliberation Revisited

For sure, the large stock of deliberative innovations in Chinese grassroots politics and political reforms and institutional designs are usually criticized their superficial procedures and official manipulation, which are sometimes even counterproductive. Meanwhile, spontaneous deliberative meetings are also under official surveillance, which may finally transform into (semi)official-background deliberative practices. This is very true but far more the whole picture of the grassroots deliberation, my case studies indicate that these practices are interpreted in a very different way and to be designed and tailored for the

grassroots features. Firstly of all, these deliberative forms benefitted from local autonomy, which leaves more room for the experimentations in the villages and urban communities; secondly, this hybrid deliberative model both takes modern democratic deliberation and cultural-historical practices into account, which facilitates the implementation of deliberative politics and governance in the Chinese grassroots; thirdly, far away from the political center, this unique political-social structure in Chinese village reshapes the public deliberative idea and practice that accommodate to and are embedded in everyday life.

Evidently, there is no way of saying a single case study and this type of deliberation is contributing to a solid bottom-up democratization, or, superior to individualist deliberation in the West. I argue that, since the deliberative democracy studies shift their focus on more inclusive visions, more nontraditional subjects are emerging and bringing fresh research agendas in this dimension. An open deliberative system should seek more possibilities for deliberative practices and justify how such types enrich the deliberative understanding. For instance, in Chinese rural villages, there can be authentic deliberation amongst villagers (sometimes with village cadres), especially in some informal occasions. Such societal interactions are inherited from some Confucian practices, which in turn, reshape the villagers' deliberative ideas and behavioral logic. These practices coexist and are reconciled with modern local governance, and achieve a pragmatic and stable revivification of the normative paradigm of deliberative democracy.

3.1.1 Deliberation within a Grassroots Autonomous Context

To Habermas, public deliberation composes a vital part of the 'dual-track' deliberative system, an autonomous public sphere, consisting of the "self-limiting political associations oriented by a relationship to the state, but not seeking a share in the state power", thus contributing to a more democratic deliberation among free and equal citizens¹⁵². There is also growing consensus that the ultimate goal of public deliberation is not necessarily linked to the decision-making. It is joint construction of publicly convincing reasons during the deliberative process and the public sphere and civil society it shaped and nurtured. If

¹⁵²According to Bohman (2000), "a dialogical process of exchanging reasons for the purpose of resolving problematic situations that cannot be settled without interpersonal coordination and cooperation." In this definition, deliberative democracy theory in pluralism and complexity reconciles and defends the autonomy and sovereignty simultaneously.

one is looking for the evidence of public and autonomous deliberation in the Chinese context, village deliberation seems to be the best venue.

Grassroots elections in Chinese rural village encountered backlashes in recent years and presented a downturn. Many observations interpret village autonomy after the re-centralization in the last two decades as ‘levitation’ (Ying, 2014; Zhu, 2017), which refers to the village committees’ loose control on village finance and major decision-making. Another explanation is ‘village hollowing’ (He, 2017; Ouyang, 2018), which indicates a loss of young and middle-aged population in the village, and such a trend makes the ‘democratic centralism (*minzhu jizhong zhi* 民主集中制)’ more difficult to implement. For instance, the rural left-behind population are more demotivated to participate in collective affairs (or political decision-making). These changes are eroding grassroots autonomy and stability. Against this background, for seeking a post-election procedure on village governance (Björn, 2009), methods going beyond election are on the agenda, which refer to both officially-promoted and spontaneously-facilitated deliberation. This very idea is supported by many authors with its potential promotion of ‘local democracy’ (He, 2005, 2014, 2018; Fishkin, He, Luskin and Siu, 2010). A deliberative approach is consistent with some inherent communicative ways in rural villages, such as the private compounding, nonlegal settlements, village elite mediations, and fractional competition. These features in many ways outline the villagers’ participative awareness and deliberative capacities.

At first glance, such a hybrid model may make some democrats uncomfortable given that even the Chinese autonomous grassroot is far from being democratic and public-sphere-based with some legacies from authoritarianism¹⁵³. Nevertheless, my analysis in this case is methodologically different from those previous studies. Rather than applying an exotic yet democratic discourse on Chinese localities, more precisely, my studies benefit from the Confucian traditions while reconciling some features of modern governance. That said, this deliberation best fits Chinese rural politics, and maintains the delicate balance and interaction amid various participants, villagers, village cadres and the superior governments. This cannot be simply achieved by pushing a so-called *democratic* governance.

¹⁵³Fishkin proposed two discursive dimensions in his analysis on Chinese local deliberative democracy in the book of *When the People Speak: Deliberative Democracy and Public Consultation*. Firstly, lacking Schumpeterian competitive democracy and with individual rights only partly implemented, the public may only be consulted rather than invited to deliberate. The second and more methodological lens, Fishkin’s new design of deliberative polling is more of an exotic and democratic form applied to the Chinese grassroots level (mainly town(ship)s, some communities and rural villages), but takes citizen’s original behavior logic and communicative traditions less into account.

On closer examination, deliberation is of importance in two dimensions: as a remedy for village election and its practical implications. A deliberative approach is considered supplementary and sometimes facilitating village elections. Compared with the competitive and fair village election in the 1990s, vote buying and non-competitive on village head and higher-up' nomination on village party branch are rendering village election a rubber-stamp. For this dilemma, academic enthusiasts were seeking a beyond-election approach on villagers' political participation. Around 2000, Schubert (2009), for example, argues that "political participation is more influenced by election procedures, policy formulation, implementation, accountability institutions, and participation combines with the public responses to feed into regime legitimacy". Thereafter, village governance was established in a way that mixed with participation, consultation, and manipulative deliberation¹⁵⁴. A 'deliberative turn' in Chinese localities is quite commonly regarded beginning with the deliberative polling in *Zeguo* township in Wenling, Zhejiang, a deliberative *empowerment* to the lay citizens for decision making (He, 2008; Fishkin *et al.*, 2010). This highlighting of deliberation in village decision-making and village elections (Ogden, 2002; Yang, 2004) indicates that from such an approach amid various participants can emerge administrative rationalization and accountability, which motivates both village cadres and villagers to adopt such a method going beyond procedural village elections.

Also, a deliberative approach has strong practical implications. Tan (2006) argues that the village deliberation based on self-government can be the possible way to cultivate a civil society and facilitate autonomous interaction. At best, as both 'consultative democracy' and 'authoritarian deliberation' indicate, deliberation in rural village focuses mostly in its *functionalist* side. As shown in my case observations, deliberation in both formal institutions and informal venues is adopted for maintaining social order and dealing with some social resistance. This pragmatic consideration is motivated for several reasons and incentives: village cadres hope to ameliorate their political performances and accumulate political credibility. For the villagers, participating in and deliberating amongst others create more opportunities for accessing and having an influence on the decision-making process. A deliberative approach in Chinese rural autonomy always entangles with some other means such as compromise, unspoken rule, (elite)mediation and so on. I summarized this deliberative form as an inheritance of Chinese traditions (e.g. Confucianism) functioning

¹⁵⁴'Manipulative deliberation' means it can generate a fake impression of empowerment but in fact disempowers citizens. See Ugarriza and Caluwaerts (Eds.). (2014); He (2014).

together in a problem-solving way. These two core dimensions are well elucidated in my following case studies.

3.1.2 Village Societal Structure and Deliberative Institutions

A better understanding of Chinese village societal structure is conducive to observing how various stakeholders engage and influence deliberation and games. Commonly, the formal village power structures are stipulated in the *Organic Law* (1998, 2018): the village leading groups are the village committee (elected) and village party branch (semi-election, designated by town(ship)s)¹⁵⁵, along with other positions such as accountants and women's directors. But this formal structure presents differently depending on the historical periods and regions. Not restricted to the formal and fixed formats¹⁵⁶, informal and unstructured *power* also offers multiple options for villagers to bring their opinions to the arena of public concerns. To Tong (2002), the remaining two informal powers, namely, the village elite's participation in politics and ordinary villagers' potential uprisings can also rebalance the village power games¹⁵⁷. For the former, it refers to those who have a certain social influence, prestige and appeals; despite the latter having mostly a limited presence, their potential participation (e.g. uprising and petition), sometimes have an influence on decision-making by the majority rule. This three-dimensional power-sharing structure basically covers all stakeholders in a toolbox within the hybrid format, and the latter two informal influencers are jointly influencing or sometimes making decisions via various (in)formal deliberative institutions and settings.

¹⁵⁵Starting from 2021, the village head serves concurrently as the village party secretary in some rural villages in Shandong.

¹⁵⁶The very fixed format of village power structure, namely, 'systemic meritocracy', refers to the function of the main stakeholders of village cadres who possess the village formal power resources and play the role of connecting the higher-ups and the public. For their part, the exercise of political power is restricted by superiors (town(ship)s); simultaneously, they must respond to villagers' concerns.

¹⁵⁷There are also some other explanations about the village power structure in Chinese villages, such as the 'rule of the rich' proposed by Zhu (2017). Zhu's profound quantitative analysis found that two-thirds of the village cadres in Zhejiang Province are served by the rich villagers (owners of enterprise, companies or self-employed business). Unlike the smart elite governance, the rich exert influence on political decision-making through their strong economic strength. There are also some non-mainstream interpretations (e.g. Wei, 2015; Zhang, 2018), in some villages with high urbanization in Guangdong province, outside forces, such as companies that contract village land, also have a great influence on village decision-making especially in rural economics. However, it should be noted that compared with the general model of the village power structure, these cases have their specificity. Commonly, the village committees (the village party branch and village committee), the village elite and ordinary villagers constitute the tripartite power of the village power structure (outsiders may have only limited influence).

Formal village deliberative institutions are the Village Assembly (*cunmin huiyi* 村民会议) and Village Representative Assembly (*cunmin daibiao huiyi* 村民代表会议). The Village Assembly is a *de facto* supreme decision-making body over major collective affairs in the village self-government, which provides a venue for villager's participation and deliberation, but often fails with large-scale and sometimes disorderly participation. Nevertheless, it is quite often adopted as the voting machine by the village cadres, especially with the Village Party Branch dominating both the deliberative agenda and procedural settings. The Village Representative Assembly is more like an institution that takes into account both the representativeness and deliberativeness to reflect the popular will and to be effective in governing (Thurston, 1998), however, in real practice, the efficient and more responsive decision-making always marginalize the procedural deliberative processes. This dilemma cannot be simply dissolved by those preset institutions. Conversely, it may be handled by or complemented with reliable and informal ways.

Those informal and unstructured deliberative institutions are indispensable besides the aforementioned legitimized decision-making bodies. Small-scale grassroots autonomous unit of Village Small Group (*cunmin xiaozu* 村民小组), for example, is a more flexible deliberative form with the continuation of the original 'production team (*shengchandu* 生产队)' based on familiarity, kinship ties and geographic proximity between and among the neighbors. Albeit decisions made by the Village Small Group are not collective enough, and sometimes lacking representativeness (compared with the Village Committee decision-making), this mini-public deliberation is more inclusive, interactive, equal and efficient with freer expression which is closer to the normative standards of deliberation. Nevertheless, compared with the efficiency-oriented decision made by village committees, the mini-public deliberation based on kinship or geographic links usually lead to the fractional competition, of which may hinder an equal deliberation within.

Some flourishing spontaneous deliberative institutions initiated by villagers or semi-official background settings-village councils (*cunmin yishihui* 村民议事会)¹⁵⁸, for example-facilitate and

¹⁵⁸A study on the alike deliberative institutions of village councils is not only flourishing in the east-coastal regions like Wenling city, Zhejiang, such designs also widely practiced in Chengdu and its suburbs in Sichuan. Some western authors like Dutoya and Frenkiel (2018), Frenkiel and Lama-Rewal (2019), also conclude that, "The *yishihui* settings-small group assemblies of less than thirty with a moderator trained to distribute speech as equally as possible among participants of different walks of life and oral skills, with no physical position of authority (no podium or stage)-are also supposed to create spaces for common citizens to discuss issues freely and respectfully, exchange arguments and be confronted with diverging opinions before making collective binding decisions, which authorities must eventually respond to...the process is not only consultative, as it is both empowering and deliberative".

channel villagers' participation in collective affairs. Those practices may be loosely defined as a *deliberative* looking, for inheriting with a strong sense of tradition of villagers' behavioral logic and Confucian mindsets. Nevertheless, these deliberative processes that are inscribed in, and shaped by, its rules, logic are more indigenized within the village deliberation in a way. Authors working on Chinese rural politics have little to say about how these initiatives reconcile with and are embedded in the Chinese rural governance, then to justify its reasonable existence as a liberal deliberation.

These case studies of village deliberation are based on a combined methodology: modern democratic deliberation combined with the traditional Confucian legacy. This *coalition* filled the void of indigenized Chinese practice with the more inclusive democratic deliberation. For the pragmatic lens, a deliberative approach can effectively ease the tensions between local governments (the village committee, town(ship) government) and villagers, solve practical uncertainties. These epistemic functions are evident of the limited empowerment and meaningful communications under the autonomous context, for more, a normative yet arguable perspective, though very uneven in deliberative quality and scope, this model may constitute another counterpart to the Western sense of democratic deliberation.

3.2 Chinese Village Deliberation: Parallel Form to Democratic Deliberation

This part of case study will give a more concrete demonstration of rural village deliberation, including the interactions amongst the various participants and stakeholders, deliberative institution designs and deliberative influence. A very sociological-political methodology is adopted to understand and conceptualize the actors' actions. For instance, private deliberation and compromise is superior to the legal method for solving practical conflicts. Villagers' resistance (e.g. unrests and petition) is the vital motivation for village cadres and superior governments to make compromise and concession. Local stability is always the focus of local officials. Fractional competition based on kinship can rebalance the political power in the village in relative equilibrium condition. These formulations were developed to explain the subtle and sometimes contradictory practices encountered in the field.

3.2.1 Case Outline: Socio-Political Structure in Chinese Village

3.2.1.1 Social Structure of Villages in Northern China with the ‘Split Model’

The selected cases are located in K District, Dongying, Shandong Province, North China Plain. Established in 1982, Dongying, as a prefecture-level city, is one of the youngest cities in China. It lies on the northern (Bohai Sea) coast of Shandong within which the *Shengli* Oilfield is the second largest oilfield in China and plays a significant role in the regional economy. My fieldwork mainly focuses on several villages in K district¹⁵⁹. A typical resource-dependent city, Dongying’s development is quite limited with a single economic type. Also, in terms of traditional culture, Confucius-Mencius doctrines that originated nearby have a great influence both on people’s thinking and behavioral logic.

A closer examination was made of the social structure of these villages which are commonly categorized as *split models* according to a village structure analysis by professor He Xuefeng (2012) from Central China Normal University, with a prolonged fieldwork in rural China (the other two types are *decentralized* and *united* models). Noticeably, villagers living in the same village mostly share the same family name¹⁶⁰. Nevertheless, they belong to different kinship-based factions (*yijiaren* 一家人) with a competitive relationship. Villages with a *split* character are commonly seen in northern rural China with the continuum of a strong culture behind the extended family surname. Previous studies on Chinese villages prefer to introduce and adopt a top-down state-governance perspective for interpreting village autonomy regarding policy implementation. For example, some village committees in L and S town(ship)¹⁶¹ failed to take their own political features into account by blindly following the higher-ups’ instructions. Case analysis with an ontological interpretation that adopts a bottom-up perspective helps understand the characteristic, communicative and behavioral logic of the rural villagers in these villages.

¹⁵⁹The K district is an administrative district that has a population of 25,000, with jurisdiction over five towns, two neighborhoods and one provincial economic development zone.

¹⁶⁰In several of the case villages, they are basically ‘one village shares one surname’, for instance, ‘Li’, ‘Wang’, ‘Zheng’, and ‘Qin’, even though they are miscellaneous surnames, they only account for a small part.

¹⁶¹L township and S town are two administrative units under the jurisdiction of K district in Dongying.

Besides the aforementioned kindred factional competition, these villages also feature a certain xenophobia and self-isolation (except for weddings, there is poor villager mobility amongst the villages). Communities formed by neighborhoods have also played a crucial part. Among the numerous villages in the vast rural north China plain, the basic units participating in village affairs commonly belong to the same clan or faction with their descendants pertaining to the same ancestor (usually the kinship branch within *Five Blessings* ‘*Wufu* 五福’), which is quite different from the strong ancestral-force villages in southern China. Many Chinese rural observers, such as Fei Xiaotong, Liang Shuming and He Xuefeng, have stated that the northern clan society has disintegrated in modern times (especially since the founding of the New China). Nevertheless, these northern Chinese (Shandong) villages still retain the ‘family-faction’ small clan, and kinship still connects the familial- and factional-members for some concerted actions. This basic village socio- and sometimes political-structure still inherits from the Confucius kinship-based tradition.

From these village forms, whether Fei Xiaotong’s type of collection of interest community, or an association of Hirano Yitaro’s idea of a qualitative community, can be extracted three decisive characteristics: I. rural villages in north China have basically formed a relatively closed, independent and self-cultivating social unit; II. villages are basically dominated by certain single surnames (miscellaneous surnames only account for a small number) and split internally into multiple competing factions; and III. traditional orders and binding norms, such as moral values, a collectivist sense of self, the rule of the elderly and respect for social hierarchy, as well as village elite mediations, are still functioning stably.

Obviously, China’s modernization has partly eroded the traditional village structure by introducing some new features. Nevertheless, another departure in the discussion is whether this modernization is impelled by the complete obliteration of traditional value in Chinese villages, and how these influences are reshaping the interactions amid villagers and affecting the ways in which villagers’ consulate and deliberate. These questions are highlighted in the case interpretations: for instance, village collective affairs can be handled harmoniously within fractional cooperation rather than individual despotism. More importantly, collective consensus may be reached after full deliberation by a special committee composed of the representatives from various factions that led by the head (generally village head) in a democratic manner. “Minority obedience to the majority (usually ballot-orientated) rule is always a prohibition for village conflict resolution, given

to majority decision can be reversed by minorities' regaining advantage with their allies, thus changing the village's basic political structure" (He, 2013). To sum up, cooperation and competition between factions determine the stability and future of the village.

3.2.1.2 Methodology

The case studies are based on four months of fieldwork and observations in several villages in L and S town(ship), including several interviews with the village cadres and an analysis of the local genealogies. Reinterpretations of village deliberation are thus focused on two dimensions including both local powers (town(ship) administrations and village cadres, for example) and the villagers *per se* (certain outsiders are sometimes involved, for instance, investors of village land transfers). The reason for this two-dimensional analysis is to further provide support to traditional local political studies with a top-down state-governance that does not embody the villagers' subjectivities.

I also defend that there are no direct connections between the deliberative capacity, knowledge and modernity in response to the idea of 'deliberative capacity building' in rural China proposed by Tang Beibei (a more general idea proposed by John Dryzek, 2009). It is quite unpersuasive in pursuing the authentic, inclusive and consequential deliberation within an ideal deliberative framing and system that limits the deliberation within a close-knit group between democracy and modernization, within which strong skepticisms on villagers' deliberative capacities are raised merely because of their low literacy levels. Notwithstanding, my fieldwork and observations on those experiments reaffirm that when villagers are involved in vital collective affairs, especially concerning their own interests, their *so-called* deliberative skills are always manifested in a wiser manner combining traditional and modern approaches rather than the normatively assumed and purer form.

3.2.2 Case one: Functionalist-Based Deliberation and the Local Cadres' Political Innovation

Among policies governing individuals in the last two decades in Chinese villages, the abolition of agricultural taxes, reform of rural cooperative medical care and subsidy policies for special rural groups (e.g. rural teachers and veterans) have always received

particular attention, along with social instabilities that often arise from these sensitive domains. These primary points of conflict are also applicable to petitions in S Village, which has a total population of 1,200 under the jurisdiction of S Town and is a typical small-scale peasant economy-oriented village. In S village, the surname ‘LI’ is predominant, with many fewer miscellaneous surnames like ‘WEI’ and ‘WANG’. The leadership group in S village includes the village secretary, village head, women’s director, accountant and a grid assistant¹⁶². The case analysis focuses on a petition regarding retired teachers and poor households.

Villager LI is a rural teacher who retired before the enactment of the *Opinions of the State Council on Strengthening the Construction of Teachers Team* ([2012] No. 41). After failing to reach an agreement on compensation in several negotiations with village cadres, Li decided to petition to the S town and K district respectively. With respect to the former, the town government put pressure on the village cadres to solve these conflicts, while the district government also compelled the lower town government to once again demand that the village cadres give the final response. As the village secretary in S village complained,

During LI’s petition, surveillance is always necessary for reporting his every move to the higher-ups in a timely manner; even for petitions to Beijing, it is the village cadres who crack the hard nuts in the end...you can do nothing but keep making concessions to meet his demands. LI was also aware of his petition precede to the village stability, and as a result, a compromised solution was concluded with higher compensation after its interception in Jinan (the capital of Shandong province)¹⁶³.

Another case focused on poverty alleviation work in Xi’s era. I have interviewed several staff members working in the Town Poverty Alleviation Office (TPAO), as well as the party secretary and several poor households in the villages. A triangulated approach amongst the three parties is the core task for poverty alleviation. Commonly, rural poverty alleviation has to follow the strict procedural rule that the town(ship) governments issue

¹⁶²Grid management (*wangge hua guanli* 网格化管理) is an innovative countermeasure for grassroots political reform (2019). Namely, the local government recruits grid members who are responsible for collecting comprehensive information on the five major elements of people, places, things, objects and organizations in a specific region, which are then analyzed by a superior information processing platform. Generally, the person who serves as a grid member is a cadre in the two committees or a member of the village elite.

¹⁶³Interview with the village secretary in S village on 16.12.2019.

the poverty alleviation indicators for each village, then village cadres make evaluations¹⁶⁴ and publicly list (usually for one month) the decisions made by town(ship) governments (paper audit). Some TPAO staff members stated that, “usually, there are few dissenting opinions during the list publicity until the funds granted to the poor household; those remonstrators would petition to the higher-level (*yueji shangfang* 越级上访) and those village cadres will be directly requested to respond”. Ironically, the town(ship) governments are responsible for the final decision making, while the village cadres are blamed for restoring these disorders.

Administration that stresses hierarchy is quite common in Chinese rural governance; namely, the higher-ups give instructions, while the subordinates are responsible for policy implementation and responsive resolution and control of whatever disorder takes place at the lowest level. Compromise agreement after multi-party deliberation is always the optimal choice amid the key parties for performance legitimacies, policy implementation and fulfilment of responsibilities (O’Brien and Li, 2006). This fragile yet plausible balance is sometimes regarded as a local political innovation. These cases strongly indicate that the village cadres are the mediators both in a top-down and bottom-up fashion, while they function mainly to seek stability rather than to produce visible policies. This conflict-solving type poses a challenge and sometimes compromises the deliberative effectiveness, especially for state-sponsored deliberative cases. As for the villagers, they can use this deliberative type of decision-making to alleviate internal conflicts while exerting some influence on collective decision-making.

The Chinese government invests large amount of funds for grassroots stability maintenance each year. Although the state propaganda denies such criticism, and official framing tends to use ‘public security expenditure (*gonggong anquan zhibu* 公共安全支出)’ as a response, still, everyday (potential/collective) resistance (see Scott, 1985; Perry, 1985a, 1985b) constitutes the upmost challenge for the grassroots governance, in turn, the main tasks of grassroots cadres is to maintain the grassroots stability and order. In this sense, as put by the village head in L village, “the grassroots governance is simple, it is to ensure that there are no collective mobilizations, individual protests can be resolved in time and to prevent potential instabilities”. Against this background, a deliberative approach that

¹⁶⁴Although the assessment criteria for poor households are formulated by the upper provinces and cities, commonly, due to the village cadres being more familiar with village affairs, those decisions are usually made directly after internal discussions among village cadres without going through due process.

goes beyond election (as described by Björn of a post-election method) is widely adopted by both village cadres and villagers.

In my case observations, three key features are highlighted in this type of village deliberation. Firstly, village cadres and villagers embrace a deliberative approach out of different incentives. The village cadres seek for top-down political innovation and bottom-up responsive and problem-solving strategy, while the villagers mainly seek for a rather peaceful way for their self-defense¹⁶⁵. Secondly, this deliberative method functions both in the institutionalized/formal venues and informal occasions, but the latter is preferred, especially in an acquaintance society. Thirdly, this deliberation is functionalism-driven; that is to say, both the village cadres and villagers deliberate to solve practical problems: petition, conflicts raised in grassroots governance, for example.

3.2.2.1 How Deliberative Approach Adopted with Its Functionalist Side

As mentioned above, it is important to adopt a bottom-up and intersubjective perspective to look into the interactions amongst the villagers, villager cadres and higher-level governments (mainly town(ship) governments). Bearing this in mind, I thus depart from this two-dimensional view as well as the adoption of deliberation with public or private purposes. There are two reasons for village cadres to choose a more peaceable deliberative method for grassroots governance. First is the issue of election corruption and mistrust, whereby it seems to be a convention for some major candidates to ‘buy votes’ before the election by giving gifts (for example, tobacco, alcohol, cooking oil) by going from door to door¹⁶⁶. Interestingly, even though the voting is conducted anonymously, in a village of acquaintances, the voting preferences are predictable¹⁶⁷. Villagers are discouraged and express distrust towards such elections. This brings great challenges for village self-

¹⁶⁵In my interview, the petitioners expressed their unwillingness to petition and intensify the conflicts with village cadres (or higher governments). Nevertheless, petitions do have deterrent effects (as I mention in my next case studies, legal approaches are often not the best choice in rural villages), it can nevertheless force higher-ups to negotiate and sometimes deliberate with petitioners to solve practical problems in a timely manner.

¹⁶⁶Vote buying, in Zhao’s (2018) analysis, has some positive sides; for example, such a common phenomenon in Chinese villages can enhance villagers’ understanding of voting, which in turn consolidates a deeper knowledge of democracy. From the perspective of villagers’ subjectivity, however, this vote buying brings many grievances and facilitates a ‘deliberative turn’ in rural governance rather than voting.

¹⁶⁷Commonly, villagers with homology will vote for those they trust, those they have kinship or friendship relationship with. As for other villagers, their voting preferences are also predictable due to the close relationship amongst the villagers in the acquaintance society. Interview with villagers in S village, 06.10.2020.

governance, and as such, village cadres are thus willing to deliberate with villagers. Such deliberation facilitates responsibility sharing. As the village head in S village put it, “as long as the villagers participate in deliberation, we tacitly assume that they are responsible for the decision-making, at least partly”¹⁶⁸. This explains that when villagers petition to higher-level governments, village cadres can usually defend themselves by using the previous exchange and deliberation as an excuse to the higher-ups.

Another reason for choosing deliberative methods is that village cadres do so for seeking political innovations and better performance. “Consensus decision-making’ is still a very common decision-making type in Chinese villages; as described by the village head in S village, ‘in doing so, village leadership should be open for suggestions, brainstorming, and absorb villagers’ democratic participation”. In a public meeting for selecting the party members in S village, the village committee convened 10 CCP representatives and 10 villager representatives (non-party members) for discussing the qualifications of candidates, before making the final decision. While this type of consensus decision-making is far from being procedurally binding, the decision was made before an open meeting¹⁶⁹. This consensus making values each villager’s ‘citizenship’ (more down-to-earth descriptions given by some village cadres are *gongmin* 公民, *zhuren* 主人) in grassroots politics, especially in decision-making. Rather than representing top-down thinking such as ‘citizenship is awarded by the state’, these new changes show that citizenship is obtained through a bottom-up and spontaneous way by negotiating and deliberating with the representatives and state through peaceful and sometimes persistent resistance (e.g. petitions). This is a rather positive sign of modernization and autonomy of grassroots governance.

This innovative willingness is especially urgent in K district, where resources other than oil are lacking, and where the decline in oil production as well as strict environmental policies make it impossible for some local cadres to benefit from and improve political performance through economic growth. Nevertheless, this situation facilitates policy

¹⁶⁸Interviews with village head in S village on 11.05.2020.

¹⁶⁹It cannot be said that the consensus formation and deliberative process is window dressing, because based on the village’s acquaintance relationship, deliberations are more inclined to be conducted in non-procedural and non-fixed occasions and venues. For example, the village cadres in S village organized several pre-deliberations in mini-public settings with different CCP members and villagers. These discussions are deliberative-oriented given that there is a conversation with different opinions during the deliberative process, in other words, rational appraisal and open participation.

innovations and institutional change. As expressed by Z, a staff member from the propaganda department in L town, K district, the main task for grassroots government now is ‘forced innovation’, whether in content, form or technology. In L town, a selection of classic deliberative cases is held annually. Nevertheless, all of the 18 cases selected are compiled by the town government staff rather than village cadres. Those well-written cases are never practiced in the village. Also, for these established deliberative settings, they may vary in names but follow the same designs¹⁷⁰. Many of these top-down pressure political innovations are mere formalities, but they do introduce some modern governance ideas and methods, and to some extent they accumulate credibility for the village cadres.

In a nutshell, those village cadres and higher-ups (mainly the town(ship) government) are (un)willingly adopting a deliberative approach for various incentives; in other words, they are seeking a post-election method for better grassroots governance. While the motivation for this comes from the pressure of higher-level governments demanding political innovation, there are also grassroots cadres who want to ameliorate their political performance and maintain social stability. Upon closer examination, the government regards deliberation as a tool and embraces its *functionalist* side; however, deliberative occurrences have to achieve some practical purposes, whether to reach consensus in decision making or to maintain social stability and order, or for grassroots cadres’ self-interest.

From the perspective of the villagers, they have found that protests or petitions are more efficient to capture the leaders’ attention and thus to meet their demands, given that such (potential) threats impinge on social stability and will undermine the grassroots regime’s legitimacy, which has a direct impact on grassroots cadres’ political performance and promotion. Some new features of these petitions are described as ‘law- and policy-based safeguarding rights (*hefa hegui weiquan* 合法合规维权)’, thus showing the tactical adoption of a more peaceful strategy for their self-defense. As petitioner L stated in his petition to the K district, he cited many policies and laws that related to the remuneration of retired teachers, and repeatedly emphasized that he is legally defending his rights and interests. This pressure was followed by leaders’ concessions for deliberating with L. This linkage of villagers’ petitions and deliberation between cadres and villagers is directly concerned

¹⁷⁰Z provided 16 deliberative samples from other town(ship)s in Shandong province. They were asked to learn from these cases and explore new designs, while in actuality, most practices just changed the name while using the same settings.

with orderly and stable grassroots governance. Nevertheless, this is not always the case, and this balance remains fragile.

3.2.2.2 An Equilibrating Deliberation for a Grassroots-Stable Consideration

In my interviews, villagers were seen to not always offer willing resistance, since these petitions run the risk of being considered as illegal by the government; for example, villager H in S Village was charged with ‘defiance and extortion (*xunxun zishi* 寻衅滋事)¹⁷¹ in land transfer disputes. That said, petitioners do have to check and balance the price pre-given by the village cadres and the hierarchy of petitions. Even though villagers hope to pressure higher-ups to talk to and deliberate with them by creating chaos, this kind of pressure must be handled well. My observations indicate that villagers are good at using this non-legal yet traditional means for seeking personal benefits, rather than solving problems according to some established institutions. This logic is highlighted and articulated in Confucianism with a harmony-oriented pursuit of self-interest; unlike liberal deliberation, which makes a direct claim for personal interests, the interaction between and among villagers and village cadres maintains a relatively harmonious society. Also, this explains how these participants are engaged in daily rural politics rather than merely participating in voting.

Therefore, a Confucian sense of participation and deliberation is consistent with a participatory and deliberative conception of democracy (inspired by John Dewey among others) that locates democracy not only in electoral politics but in local contexts where people deliberate on matters of public importance (see Dewey 1927/1988). Following this logic, through pre-bargaining, villagers can gain the greatest benefit from the most

¹⁷¹The ‘defiance and extortion’ in China’s criminal law is often criticized as a *pocket charge* adopted by governments to illegally arrest dissidents under the pretext of maintaining stability. That said, ‘petition’ as a daily grassroots protest and interest expression in China is institutionalized (such social movements and grassroots protests are different from the ‘professionalization’ (McCarthy and Zald, 1973) in the West) and legally ambiguous. Petitioners have to bear legal liability once they behave improperly. Therefore, this process is usually a ‘multi-tacit understanding’ deal, the villagers’ interests are basically met, while local governments can maintain the social order. Therefore, I distinguish Chinese grassroots resistance and social movements as not only different from the Western paradigm of social movement (Anglo-Saxon type social mobilization, elite-led, formal organization based, and professionalization); it is also distinguished from the subaltern studies in the East (mainly Indian scholars’ research on South Asia, emphasis on the farmers’ collective solidarity). The Chinese type is not completely organized: grassroots activists deliberate, negotiate and conciliate with the elite and the government for material interests.

favorable deliberative conditions. This view is very contrary to previous studies by some grassroots observers in China (e.g. Tang, 2016), who think villagers are incapable of deliberation. But in fact, these cases indicate that the so-called deliberative ability not only exists in the deliberative process, but villagers can also create a deliberative sphere in an unfavorable situation.

I regard this type of deliberation as functionalist deliberation, whereby villagers, village cadres and higher-level governments all take a *functionalist* side, sometimes for the common good and aggregative decision making, while in most cases, deliberation of this type is used for personal gain, especially for some material interest. In the best conditions, deliberation amongst villagers meets the criterion of deliberative democracy; that is, in an autonomous and open public sphere, villagers can participate rather equally and offer justification of multiple views via dialogue. There are two questions that need to be investigated. The first is self-interest in village deliberation. It seems that the pursuit of self-interest contrasts with common-good-oriented deliberation. While many authors (e.g. Mansbridge, 1990, 1993, 2006; Follesdal, 2010; Niemeyer, 2014) have already revisited and justified this lens by integrating self-interest in deliberation, this process not only acknowledges but also explores this self-interest, parsing out its appropriate role in reaching the common good. Secondly, while deliberation can be used on many occasions and in venues for different purposes, for these special village deliberations, the functional needs provide the main purpose for coping with practical problems; this is also common in democracies for providing innovative governance.

3.2.3 Case Two: Compromised Deliberation and Factional Competition in an Acquaintance Society

Both Chinese official statements and academic studies have identified the roots of political consultation and deliberation in traditional Confucianism, a sociological lens that reveals the village structure in rural Chinese villages. A political perspective sheds some lights on everyday politics and interactions among villagers and village cadres. For this, a historical-cultural approach should be adopted to better grasp the more indigenized deliberative logic in traditional villages. These hypotheses, like factional competitions, influence and sometimes determine village deliberations and are reaffirmed by my fieldwork, as detailed below.

The impact of modern civilization has caused a certain transformation of the inherent acquaintance society (see Fei, 1988), especially within societies of emerging administrative villages (villages formed after demolition, resettlement, etc.). As He Xuefeng (2013) observed, ‘the rule of the elders and elites has long been undermined, yet, the naturally generating credits are no longer reliable somehow’. Nevertheless, scholars have recently re-examined the idea of semi-acquaintance society (Zhi et al., 2010) and indicated that the deconstruction of traditional rural culture is far from complete. According to interviews with several village cadres, even in the face of a series of crises such as population loss, weakening of the villagers’ centripetal force, those spillovers still maintain blood relations with the left-behind population, and the traditional norms still have certain binding power. Thus, it can be said that interpersonal relationships based on a semi-acquaintance society have not changed substantially.

3.2.3.1 Tradition Norms with Compromise *vs* Modern Procedural Deliberation

Traditional norms still have a persistent existence in some Chinese rural villages¹⁷² and exercise an influence on villagers’ communicative thinking and behavioral logic. This case focuses on the villagers’ deliberative thinking and habits to look into how compromise deliberation is conducted, and resultant decisions are being made. In S village, though the previous 17 small villager groups (*cunmin xiaozu* 村民小组) no longer exist, neighborhoods based on small, connected groups or kindred factions still predominate, and there is a close relationship of mutual assistance among group members. Usually, other members will offer help when it is needed (e.g. weddings and funerals). Hence, some important decisions (besides decision-making made by the village committees) and conflicts among villagers are generally resolved by a group or factional representatives or village elites.

Interestingly, this setting exists in parallel with village committee decision-making, especially for trivial daily matters. In a mediation dispute over land occupation in S village, involved parties did not meet face to face; instead, it is the representatives of the parties who conducted mediation under the auspices of a third party with unrelated interests and

¹⁷²Archon Fung and Erik Olin Wright conducted similar case studies in 2003 by focusing on very local deliberative experiments and neighborhood-based deliberations in Brazil, deliberations by neighborhood councils in Chicago, multi-stakeholder deliberations in the U.S, and village-level deliberations in Kerala, India. While such case studies show an enhanced democratic decision-making by innovating local governance, these cases take place within a democratic context.

conveyed appeals through them. In the interviews, litigants showed their trust in those representatives (sometimes the village elite or prestigious elders) and their willingness to be bound by the outcomes. This type of arrangement leads to two types of deliberation, deliberation between representatives and pre-deliberation between representatives and litigants, of which the former is often decisive. In fact, both villagers and village cadres favor this type of third-party and representative deliberation, saying, “it can better resolve conflicts rather than face-to-face deliberations and interventions; the latter can sometimes intensify the divergences and thus make the situation worse”¹⁷³.

Against this background, this type of deliberation also has features of factional competition, as mentioned above, in which sub-factions under the same surname are competing with each other for both material interest and social prestige. For instance, in Q village of S Town, the posts of village head and party secretary have always been held by the ‘Qin (surname)’ clan, that is within the same kinship group. In fact, the excellent mobilizing and governmental capabilities of this faction have won the support of both its clansmen and other villagers. Also, their efforts to rebalance the competition with other factions keep the village in a mutually beneficial and harmonious state. The village head in Q village stated that, whether it is the village election or the factional interests, the reason why they can maintain a relatively balanced and stable state is the result of compromise after deliberation.

In the villages of the vast northern regions of China, it is easier to rebalance factional competition and the interests of different clans through more equal dialogue and deliberation, because such clans are small-scale and usually the extension of the familial kinship. Even though some northern villages are large in population size, this coexistence between the large population and small clans can be maintained stably via the tighter internal cohesion. This is not always the case, however, as mentioned in the typical case of Xiawei Village in Guangdong, where the strong and persistent clan power and factional competition have triggered long-lasting disorder. Village autonomy has aggravated this unequal competition. This chaos has been settled only after the implementation of the Village Representative Deliberative System in Xiawei Village, Shitan Town in 2014 by

¹⁷³Interview of the village head in S village, 02.12.2020. This softer yet less antagonistic and obscure conflict-solving approach is more in line with the euphemism of the ‘harmony of village and interpersonal relationship’; in other words, the confrontational conversations and dialogues, as well as the legal approaches, are not a good choice for solving practical problems in the village.

introducing some rather modern grassroots deliberative governance. That is to say, the geographical differences determine the compatibility between the village clans and some modern governance methods. In my case observations, those factional competitions are very positively facilitated by a hybrid deliberative governance, while in some southern villages, some modern yet notoriously ineffective governance approaches have to be tamed and reconciled in the grassroots autonomies.

3.2.3.2 Power, Money, Social Prestige and Compromised Deliberation

The aforementioned analysis of the socio-political structure in China's (northern) rural villages indicated a triangular equilibrium amongst the village cadres, village elites, and ordinary villagers, and this balance constitutes a relatively stable village self-governance. Although the Village Assembly is considered as the supreme body of power according to the *Organic Law*, the other two political forces definitely hinder the exercise of the supreme power of these legitimized organs. The existing literature is mostly interested in the institutionalized power-sharing in the Village Committee, Village Party Branch and Village Assembly (e.g. Tan, 2006), and has little to say about the outside influences in reshaping village politics. In K district, rich villagers play an important role in the decision-making and consensus-formation processes. They usually exert an influence on the collective decision-making by donating (for example, repair roads, temples) and supporting poor households in the village. In some villages, the village cadres themselves are rich, or in other cases, the rich do not seek political status, but only exert a certain influence on decision-making.

Why is such a transition considered a positive sign? In the traditional village power-sharing, the Village Party Branch and Village Committee are the *de facto* power organs, public policy decisions concerning villager welfare are made by village cadres without authentic deliberation or true consent of the villagers. The acceleration of the marketization in rural villages in the last decades spawned a group of wealthy villagers. This gives a chance for those villagers to participate in and exert an influence on collective decision-making. In particular, those villagers have more social resources and channels. For instance, they may bring and increase the villagers' income, in this sense, they have more influence than the village cadres. In S village, villagers showed more trust and reliance on the former Village

Secretary¹⁷⁴ than the incumbent village cadres due to his economic achievements. For this sake, as regards some decisions, especially concerning economic policies, village cadres have to take economic elite members' interests into consideration.

Another political force is the village elite: they can be village cadres, wealthy villagers, or just some ordinary villagers. They are prestigious in the acquaintance village, especially as regards morals. This moral influence is first reflected in the fact that the village elite can play the role of mediators in rural conflicts. In my interviews in L, S and Q village, most villagers preferred the village elite's mediation, or their representation for communication. Due to their unbound identities, they themselves can give fairer judgments. Another reason is that compromise solutions are always preferred for both parties can keep the face (*lianmian* 脸面¹⁷⁵) and certain interests. This explains that in order to preserve face, villagers will be more willing to make certain concessions or compromises. Just as the villagers in L village put, "if you have disrepute or losing face in the village, no one will want to deal with you, and you will drown in saliva."

As I indicated, a rather modern, standardized and procedural governance model may conditionally *fit* for Chinese grassroots governance, nevertheless, this is by no means the whole picture. That is why some modern governance methods are often not appealing compared to the more hybrid approaches aforementioned, and they may sometimes fail due to their window-dressing functions. This does not mean a persistent insistence on traditional resources. It more likely benefits from these indigenous sources and contributes to a 'third way' for Chinese grassroots governance. As an explanation of China's success,

¹⁷⁴This former village Party Secretary brought considerable income and investments to the villagers during his tenure. He was deprived of the party membership due to drunk driving and ceased to serve as the village cadre, but he still has personal charisma and mobilization ability among the villagers.

¹⁷⁵Many studies disdain the influence of rural custom and culture on rural interpersonal relationships, interactions and decision-making. On the contrary, they prefer to adopt a modern yet structured perspective to promote the rural modernization. As my last case indicates, L country failed in grassroots governance innovation due to it imposed unified regulations to those villages without taking the villages' own features into consideration. This top-down innovation is not only a formality, but also increases the burden on both the village cadres and villagers. In the rural villages of northern China, the face (synonymous with personal reputation, social evaluation, etc.) is the basis for maintaining a benignant interaction among the villagers. Villagers losing face (*dianlian* 丢脸) always means a loss of social reputation, such a shame will make it difficult for this villager to survive in the village acquaintances. This also explains why those village elites with high social prestige still play an important role in the rural collective affairs.

the Chinese model is based on a large stock of experiments¹⁷⁶ that are rooted in local conditions, rather than on the universal application of an abstract ideal.

Also, when talking about Confucian governance (a rather later idea), we should not merely refer to some single doctrine or norm (like many authors cast their studies with certain pieces on Confucianism). That said, the influence of Confucianism should be more broadly understood as a lifestyle. Such an understanding, in turn, vividly reinterpreted in how Confucianism has constructed Chinese people's way of thinking, and their daily interactions with others. These practices should be incorporated and articulated in (modern) governance, rather than Confucianism remaining a merely normative thinking. Typically, moral accountability—a core notion in Confucianism—is permeated in and reconciled with a deliberative governance concept, for example, in the use of compromise to resolve village conflict (petitions and instability brought by the factional competition), respect for morality (mediation of the village sages), also the balance maintained after kinship-based factional competition. This very moral governance follows some modern methods and provides villagers with more communicative tools besides mere voting. In many ways this is compatible with deliberative polling, citizen juries and mini-public deliberation in the West.

5 Conclusion

The rising influence of Western deliberative democracy theory in Chinese academia has tended to marginalize China's indigenized and widespread grassroots deliberation, which is persistently interpreted through the discourse of Chinese deliberative democracy. To many, this type of unorthodox deliberative practice is abnormal and may have little significance for deliberative evolution. Authors who hold this kind of thinking may be narrow-minded and may run counter to the idea of building a more inclusive yet down-to-earth deliberative system. My efforts are neither to exclude the influence of Western deliberative democracy studies in China like many indigenized scholarships do, nor to indiscriminately apply Western theories to Chinese practice. The contribution of this chapter is to reconcile some Western doctrines and practices with Chinese deliberative democracy. This analytical framework is proved both theoretically and practically feasible

¹⁷⁶For similar explanations, see Heilmann (2018), for how these bottom-up hierarchical experiments facilitate China's trial and error.

and acceptable in China's deliberative reality, and it may also provide another model for studying deliberative democracy and its practice in a multicultural context.

As my first case indicated, in the higher hierarchical and some key domains, legislation, for example, a consultative approach is more appealing with the absence of competitive elections, providing public goods through participatory and consultative ways is easier to reach. In Chinese authoritarian legislation, as I coined this type of 'the CCP monopoly, N/LPC pseudo dominant, C/LPPCC being formalistic consultative platform and public (passively) participation', basic legislative consultation sometimes takes public grievance into account and makes concessions or compromises. In the local regulation-making process, these limitations are redistributed within some more sophisticated settings—the infightings between the LPC and the government (departments), as well as the outside participation in the legislative consultation, the LPPCC, the ordinary public, experts, etc. Nevertheless, this chaotic legislative model, in turn, achieved an efficient and stable law-making in authoritarian Chinese context so far.

If it is said that economic development was the foremost political issue before the 18th CCP's National Congress, then, strengthening and innovating the grassroots governance has been the very bedstone in China's politics (Hao, 2020) in the new era. China's great attention to grassroots governance is not only put on stability maintenance, but it also composes a vital part of governance with *Chinese characteristics*. Against this background, the persuasiveness of village deliberation is stronger in China's indigenized deliberative democracy. It inherits deliberation based on harmony and factional competition in the village collectivities from the legacies of Confucianism. Villagers interactions are also based on kinship, in which compromises and concessions are made with the mediation of village cadres and elite members. More recently, some democratic and modern deliberative institutions are established to cultivate the more standardized deliberation. Simultaneously, cultural-historical deliberation is also incorporated within this toolkit to functioning to solve practical conflicts and rebalance the relationship among villagers.

A broader view: governance in both democracies and authoritarian systems has been evaluated to be more inclusive and responsive. To do so, many theorists are trying to add something new, for instance, the participatory, collaborative and deliberative governance. In fact, China shows a relatively high degree of openness and responsiveness for these governmental forms. Previously, these ideas were practiced through diverse (in)formal,

(un)structured and state-local institutions and forms. In this process, the (hierarchical) communications are pervading in the interactions amongst the Chinese state, government and civil society. It proved firstly that this government-led deliberative model facilitated good governance; secondly, the more autonomous grassroots deliberation achieved certain empowerment and social stability.

While in the end, I have to respond to the classic dilemma, that is, if the more *flexible* use of deliberation both normatively and empirically (e.g. the China case) is a paradox for maintaining the core principles of deliberative democracy on the one hand, while risking stretching its meaning on the other hand. This concern has already been justified by many authors. For instance, Bächtiger *et al* (2010) pointed that, “deliberation is suffering from the risk of becoming so broad as to admit communicative distortions that are problematic.” But my case studies do not intend to fall into this controversy. First of all, I cleared the theoretical boundaries by adopting the participatory, consultative and deliberative terms respectively for avoiding the slippery slope of allowing almost every form of communication to be categorized as deliberative. Secondly, even in some alike deliberative practices, the grassroots village deliberation, for example, I distinguished different moments. That said, there may be procedural deliberation while the decision-making is compromised. This helps to retain the deliberation’s distinct normative framework while holding the political agents to a higher standard of political behavior.

Conclusion

The obsession with deliberative democracy has led to various conceptual understanding of deliberation and deliberative concept democracy. As Mutz (2008) lamented, “it may be fair to say that there are as many definitions of deliberation as there are theorists.” Albeit scholarship in this realm is vast, it has not reached the ceiling insofar. For this normative blueprint, many radical criticisms revolved around its very disconnection from reality; nonetheless, it is important to soberly realize that deliberative democracy, as Ercan and Dryzek (2015) claimed, is a normative theory rather than a total naivety (or as Mansbridge *et al* 2010 stated it rather is an explanatory theory about existing politics). Deliberative democracy offers a diverse set of normative standards upon which these actually existing democracies and democratic practices can be analyzed, criticized and improved (Ercan and Dryzek, 2015). Therefore, deliberative democrats may be more motivated and inspired to explore how deliberative democracy can be more transferred in real political life in the least distorted manner.

This normative understanding is reconstructed on the rethinking of the core dimensions in deliberative democracy; that is to say, reason (communicative interaction) and the pursuit of the common good. These two tenets are also exactly the core to differentiate deliberative democracy from other democratic forms. Bearing too much critiques of risking to loosely define what constitutes and account for ‘deliberation’, deliberative democrats have the ambition to broaden and spread a fair understanding of this concept with the reorganization and acknowledgement of some other communicative forms like emotional expression, rhetoric, storytelling, humor, and even silence. These interactions convey some reasoning exchange which can contribute to and facilitate a more down-to-earth and reciprocal human communication. Nevertheless, as Steiner (2008) worried, “...If the concept is stretched too far it begins to mean everything and therefore nothing”. If this is the truth, our understanding of the common good should also have to be modified by jettisoning consensus-reaching in contestatory deliberation. This deliberative process aims to clarify (at least) some public preferences, and if possible, to reach a common sense.

It seems that all these discussions are limited to the Anglo-American studies, with some other mainstream Western academics. Studies rarely originate from different polities, authoritarian China, for example. Very few believe that deliberation and democracy can exist under Chinese authoritarianism, and if there are, they are supposed to be symbolic.

This long-lasting dichotomous mindset (sometimes bias) between authoritarianism and democracy is ubiquitous and somehow predominates in Western China studies. Those westerners are always wanting to see a China they have reshaped rather than its original type. Until the beginning of this century, only some related discussions were set on the agenda. The pioneer, He Baogang, proposed the paradoxical conception of authoritarian deliberation in China (later, this concept extends its utilities to some other authoritarian regimes) to explain how Chinese authoritarianism coexists with deliberation and what it looks like. Theoretically, authoritarianism is compatible with deliberation, and the latter is mostly methodologically adopted for serving the former rather than for the empowerment of citizens. Practically, those flourishing deliberative cases in China (especially at the grassroots) also hint at this possibility and potential.

To justify the rational existence of Chinese deliberative democracy (*xieshang minzhu* 协商民主), I conducted a two-dimensional study, a comparative analysis between China and the West on this special issue of China's deliberative democracy in a horizontal sense, and an analysis based on hierarchical, geographical and professional factors on this ambiguous concept in Chinese context. These efforts texturized and recaptured some of the essence of Chinese deliberative democracy in a comprehensive consideration. All these bold assumptions begin with a revisiting of Chinese authoritarianism and its resilience. My analyses go beyond the ineradicable tradition in Western Chinese studies of expecting China's democratic transition (as repletely emphasized in Huntington's (1991) analysis, as well as his followers' discussions on the third wave of democratization). We should on the contrary look into China's political model and change in a pragmatic way without being confined to this analytical framework.

This shift requires both Chinese and Western scholars to maintain an open mind, not to overemphasize the threats brought by China's rise, and simultaneously avoid the over-description of China's uniqueness. This rebalancing gives Chinese researchers more room to observe why China's authoritarianism is maintained and still vigorous. Evidently, many contributors function in this continuum: in the absence of competitive election, how can the CCP provide public good? How can the superior level listen and communicate with the lower level, for whatever reason of surveillance or equal communication? How can China's authoritarian regime and government obtain legitimacy and support from its people? All these questions refer to the consultation and deliberation with the people. Authoritarian consultation and deliberation under Western perspective is more from a

methodological sense to analyze how such communicative forms may facilitate and consolidate the CCP's authoritarianism. However, in China's propagandistic blueprint and some domestic academic consensus, deliberation not only constitutes the basic form of democracy *with Chinese characteristics*, but it also refers to a better means of governance.

After this comparative analysis, what can the best description of China's deliberative democracy be? Obviously, it is impossible to give a definition with a monogenetic and complete Western or Chinese indigenized reinterpretation. Normatively, this conception incorporates some doctrines from mainstream Anglo-America deliberative democracy, which advocates equal dialogue and deliberation between and among many others but it insists on the CCP's leadership. The hierarchical communication ensures the CCP can keep an eye on the whole society, while dialectically speaking, the good governance also derives from this information collection and analysis. From the initial political consultation, Mao's mass line, the United Front Work and other original forms to the present (especially after the 18th National Congress), the reconstruction of 'extensive multi-layered and institutionalized', a consultative/deliberative system (according to the CCP's propaganda), ensures that the CCP can listen to and hear the voices inside and outside the party (though not in all cases). This dialogical form also channels state-society communication, most often in top-down fashion. There are also some spontaneous deliberation occurrences in the grassroots, as well as compelled bottom-up communication like the consistent rural resistance (petitions, protests, uprisings and letters and visits, etc.)

Bearing these doctrines and definitions in mind, we can be witnessed the transition from an ideological leadership to the rather pragmatic governance in China in last two decades. The CCP is increasingly using good governance to earn political credit and legitimacy at home on the one hand, to proclaim its superiority of Chinese governance on the other hand. This claim implies some accusations and sarcasm on inefficient governance, over-emphasis on individualism, weak governments and rising populism in western democracies. Especially when the whole world is responding to the big epidemic in 2020, the Chinese regime has once again demonstrated the superiority of its authoritarian governance. Against this background, I conducted the empirical research and case analysis to echo this transition. The consultative/deliberative governance in China has a richer meaning than its concept; a very broadened understanding refers to the various interactions and communications between and among the Party, the government and society. This governance model is functionalist. It serves authoritarianism in China, and to some

(especially deliberation in Chinese grassroots), there exist some public empowerment and authentic deliberation.

But it must be noted that this critical reappraisal of China's deliberative democracy (*xieshang minzhu* 协商民主) is not the endorsement of authoritarianism (while some authors call it totalitarian, especially in Xi's era). Centralization of political power is indeed more evident in the Xi Jinping era. The attacks on freedom of speech, press and publication, the suppression of dissidents, and the surveillance of the whole society are all eroding China's authoritarian resilience. But no matter what, a high-pressure iron-clad regime cannot be long-lasting. If the CCP, at least in the short term, has no intention of (partially) pursuing democratization, then the priorities for the Chinese rulers, politicians, observers, supporters and dissenters are to justify the claim that the Chinese model can parallel the Western models without democracy. I would rather not make any conclusion towards China's future. My conclusion in this thesis focuses on Chinese deliberative democracy, which does facilitate China's authoritarianism with its functionalist side, but does not lead to true public empowerment.

If we go beyond this special issue of deliberative democracy by looking into the broader political environment worldwide, it seems we humans are facing unprecedented challenges, especially the epidemic and thereafter rethinking about the governance and international (geopolitical) relations in the post-epidemic era. Many Chinese scholars like Yu Keping, Yang Guangbin, and Yan Jirong refer to it as a 'great change unseen in a century (*bainian weiyou zhi dabianju* 百年未有之大变局)¹⁷⁷. At this historical stage, we can indeed see that Asia led by China is on the rise, while Western democracies are facing a democratic regression and governance decline (although it cannot be easily concluded if this will be a trend). Nationalism, populism, anti-globalization, far-rightism, terrorism, immigration, and racism are all testing traditional Western democratic values and governance. It is also a historical opportunity that facilitates the rise of China.

¹⁷⁷'Great changes unseen in a century' is a major conclusion made by Xi Jinping in 2020 on the current international situation and its development. It refers to the current political situation and their intertwined relationship in the fields of economy, politics, culture, science and technology at home and abroad. This official discourse is reinterpreted by the academia by 'The West's decade-long rule on world affairs is coming to an end', 'Eastern civilization will return to the center of the global stage after 500 years, and China is playing a leading role.' See Dong, Z. (2020). Domestic Academic Research on the 'Great Changes Unseen in a Hundred Years' in Recent Years. The Research Institute of Party History and Literature of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party. Available at: <http://www.dswxyjy.org.cn/n1/2020/0805/c427152-31811747.html>. [Accessed 20 May. 2021].

Since the reform and opening up in 1978, China has achieved world-renowned economic achievements. In 2020, China proclaimed that it had eliminated the absolute poverty of hundreds of millions of people. China's infrastructure, overseas investment, high-tech can also compete with the United States. Nevertheless, discussions on China's political reform and democratization are far from getting the attention they deserve. Is China having any political reform or desire of pursuing democracy? Zheng Yongnian, political theorist in Hongkong Chinese University (Shenzhen) (Former Professor of the National University of Singapore, Director of the East Asian Institute) argues that, from the perspective of comparative politics, if adopting the Western party model (whether it is a typical British or American liberal party or European continental party) to reinterpret the CCP and its political reforms, the conclusions must be negative. But the fact is that the CCP has laid the foundation for China's political reform in three aspects, leading China's economic growth and maintaining social stability, and establishing a stable political system over the past four decades. Like many Chinese intellectuals (as well as some western authors), he called on the West to eliminate misunderstandings about the CCP, for the two sides to interact harmoniously .

Nonetheless, we do not have to be too pessimistic. There are more and more Chinese intellectuals who have both domestic academic background and Western experience. They are building a bridge for Sino-Western exchanges. This thesis is also completed in such a context. I have no intention to compare whether the liberal democracy in the West is better than the Chinese, or the socialism with Chinese characteristics, as described in the Chinese propaganda, is superior to the West. My contribution is to be able to reinterpret China's political changes more fairly and justly from a comparative political perspective. This is an era of mutual learning. Authoritarianism or democracy, socialism or capitalism, Keynesianism or liberalism cannot be considered as excuses for self-isolation. China needs to embrace a freer political environment, such as freedom of speech and academic freedom, while the West should also learn how to effectively respond to the epidemic as China does. This can be the best answer to a long-term coexistence of divergences.

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